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## The United States and its Coercive Democratization Attempts in Japan and Iraq

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**The United States and its Coercive  
Democratization Attempts in Japan and Iraq**

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**Political Science Department and College Honors Program Thesis**

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## **Abstract**

The United States engaged in coercive democratization (bringing democracy to a country via coercive measures such as occupation) endeavors in both Japan and Iraq, achieving drastically different results. The democratization of Japan is typically regarded as the gold standard of coercive democratization due to Japan's rapid social and economic development following the United States' occupation of the country in the years after World War II. The United States' democratization effort in Iraq, on the other hand, has failed to create such prosperous conditions and has arguably made Iraq more unstable. This thesis seeks to identify why coercive democratization worked in Japan yet failed in Iraq by analyzing a myriad of factors that potentially influenced the outcome of the United States' democratization efforts in both countries, including factors such as each nation's history of colonialism, its level of ethnic and religious homo or heterogeneity, historical internal stability/instability, as well as the dedication of resources by the United States to each democratization effort. Ultimately, this thesis aims to contribute an answer to the broader question of whether or not coercive democratization is a worthwhile endeavor for the United States to pursue in the future by attempting to unearth parameters that influence the success or failure of coercive democratization attempts.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Research Questions:

The questions that this thesis seeks to address are: Why did the United States' coercive democratization attempt succeed in post-WWII Japan yet fail in Iraq and were there specific internal conditions for the coercive democratization attempts in Japan and Iraq that contributed to the attempts' respective success and failure?

I define coercive democratization as an attempt by one or more external powers to impose a democratic political structure on another country. Common coercive democratization tactics employed by countries such as the United States are regime change and occupation. Ever since World War II, the United States of America has been a major player in international affairs, and one of the most hotly contested of the United States' foreign endeavors is the United States' increasing commitment to the idea that democracy can be spread through a process called regime change. As Richard Haass describes it, "[r]egime change allows a state to solve its problems with another state by removing the offensive regime there and replacing it with a less offensive one."<sup>1</sup> Going hand in hand with regime change is the concept of nation-building, or the "armed occupation and intrusive involvement in the internal politics of [a country]."<sup>2</sup> The United States has decided to employ these tactics quite liberally in modern times, yet has failed to achieve the standard

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<sup>1</sup> Richard N. Haass, "Regime Change and Its Limits," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2005): p. 67, accessed July 1, 2020. doi:10.2307/20034421.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

it set by coercively democratizing Japan and Germany via occupation and regime change in recent years.<sup>3</sup>

The United States occupied Japan from 1945-1952 following the United States' defeat of the Axis Powers (of which Japan was a member) during World War II. The United States entered World War II not to democratize Japan, but to respond to an act of aggression by Japan towards the United States, namely the bombing of Pearl Harbor in the U.S. state, Hawaii, in 1941. The occupation was well planned by the Department of State and was overseen by General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, as well as the predominantly American group SCAP, which shares the same name as MacArthur's title. Democratizing Japan through demilitarization, rewriting the Japanese constitution, and reforming the Japanese economy were integral parts of the United States' occupation of Japan. The democratization of Japan was also planned to be a somewhat lengthy endeavor that would require a significant dedication of resources to complete.

The United States entered Iraq on very different terms. The United States was not attacked by Iraq and entered the country without international approval under the premise that Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq, possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and that the WMDs were likely to fall into the hands of

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<sup>3</sup>James Dobbins, Michele A. Poole, Austin Long, and Benjamin Runkle, "Post-World War II Nation-Building: Germany and Japan," In *After the War: Nation-Building from FDR to George W. Bush*, p.11, Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA: RAND Corporation, 2008, accessed July 1, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg716cc.10](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg716cc.10).

terrorists.<sup>4</sup> As was the case in Japan, the occupation of Iraq was planned prior to the invasion by the Department of State, yet unlike in the case of Japan, the Department of State's plan to democratize Iraq was thrown out by the United States. The occupation itself was overseen by the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) which was led by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. Bremer would go on to make a series of mistakes, such as disbanding the Iraqi Army, that would significantly hinder the democratization of Iraq. Also, the United States was unwilling to commit the resources necessary to democratize Iraq from the get-go, resulting in an understaffed operation that lacked many basic occupation facets such as adequate safety equipment and personnel.

The outcomes of the United States' occupations of Japan and Iraq are just as different as their origins. Often referred to as the "gold standard" of coercive democratization attempts are the transformations of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany from violent, militaristic regimes into "peaceful, prosperous, vibrant democracies."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand exists the United States' coercive democratization operation in Iraq, which arguably left the country worse off, or at least no better off, in terms of safety and stability than the nation was before U.S. involvement. For example, the removal of Hussein and his Baathist regime and the subsequent U.S. occupation of Iraq have resulted in internal violence within Iraq that has resulted in the deaths of about 461,000 Iraqi civilians.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, during

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<sup>4</sup>David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk, and Bonny Lin, "The U.S. Invasion of Iraq, 2003," In *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn*, p. 161, RAND Corporation, 2014, accessed May 2, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt1287m9t.21>.

<sup>5</sup> Dobbins et. al, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Amy Hagopian et al., "Mortality in Iraq Associated with the 2003–2011 War and Occupation: Findings from a National Cluster Sample Survey by the University Collaborative Iraq Mortality

the entirety of Hussein's authoritarian rule about 250,000 Iraqi civilians had gone missing or were killed.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, while the United States did succeed in democratizing the Iraqi political system, it would be an overstatement to say that Iraq's democracy is "vibrant." For example, in May 2018, the Iraqi elections were "contested on a scale that damaged their credibility," and 156 members of the Iraqi parliament drafted a law aiming to nullify the election results.<sup>8</sup> Even though Iraqi elections are considered to be competitive due to the abundance of political parties that compete for seats in the Iraqi parliament, "low institutional capacity, widespread corruption and extensive Iranian influence, have hindered the ability of elected officials to independently set and implement laws and policies," thus undermining the legitimacy of elections in the country.<sup>9</sup> The seemingly detrimental impact that the coercive democratization attempt in Iraq has had on the country's civilian population certainly opens the door for questions to be asked about the validity and benefits of pursuing coercive democratization operations, even if the government that replaced Saddam's Baathist government is substantially more democratic in nature.

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Study," p. 10, *PLOS Medicine*, October 15, 2013, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001533>.

<sup>7</sup> "War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention," Human Rights Watch, January 25, 2004, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2004/01/25/war-iraq-not-humanitarian-intervention>.

<sup>8</sup> Harith Hasan, "The Truth about Iraq's Democracy," Atlantic Council, August 21, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-truth-about-iraq-s-democracy/>.

<sup>9</sup> "Iraq: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report," Freedom House, 2021, accessed March 13, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/iraq/freedom-world/2021>.



## **Competing Theories on Coercive Democratization:**

Political scientists have offered several theories as to when coercive democratization can succeed. These conditions include factors that predate the democratization attempt, such as the strength of governing institutions and a country's level of ethnic heterogeneity; the way that the democratization is planned for and carried out; and the motivations of leaders in the democratizing country.

Benjamin Denison notes in a Cato Institute policy brief that coercive democratization is rarely successful, and that when it is, there are several preconditions, such as strong governing institutions, previous experience with democracy, and economic modernization that can explain the few success stories of coercive democratization that do exist.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Denison is of the opinion that the successful coercive democratization attempts in Japan and Germany are the explicit results of, as he calls them, “distinct economic and political preconditions.”<sup>11</sup> For example, Denison highlights the “robust” governing apparatuses in Japan that existed prior to the United States’ invasion as a major factor as to why coercive democratization succeeded in Japan and Germany’s history of democracy as a reason why coercive democratization succeeded in Germany.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Denison, “The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Failure of Regime Change,” p. 4, Policy Analysis No. 883, Cato Institute, Washington, DC, January 6, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.36009/PA.883>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Another theory about the conditions under which coercive democratization is likely to be successful is offered by Jeffrey Pickering and Mark Peceny. In their study of coercive democratization, they note that, “states that have been present on the international stage for longer periods of time are more stable, and hence more likely to have the types of political environments that foster democracy.”<sup>13</sup> Pickering and Peceny make this claim since lengthy periods of statehood have historically appeared to foster democracy, even in states that endured long periods of authoritarian control such as is the case in many South American countries.

Pickering and Peceny also argue that high levels of “institutional ethnic conflict,” in which ethnic political organizations and parties play central roles in politics and ethnic discrimination is widespread, such as in the staffing of key government offices, negatively correlate with a country’s ability to democratize. Finally, Pickering and Peceny argue that certain aspects of a country’s cultural traditions could negatively influence democracy. In particular, they cite literature pertaining to the idea that Muslim and Arab culture is “antithetical to democracy,” noting the struggles that many Arab and Muslim countries have had insofar as democratization goes.<sup>14</sup> While it would be intriguing and perhaps even worthwhile to analyze Japanese and Muslim/Arab culture to see if there are any explanations for the success of coercive democratization in Japan and failure of democratization in Iraq, this thesis will not address questions of whether particular cultural traditions are more or less hospitable to democracy.

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<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey Pickering and Mark Peceny, "Forging Democracy at Gunpoint," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2006): p. 547, accessed July 6, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/4092792](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4092792).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 548.

While Denison and Pickering and Peceny highlight aspects of a country's political, economic, and cultural experience that predate imposition by a foreign power, Bruce De Mesquita and George Downs contend that the motivations of a foreign leader for intervening and remaining in control of a foreign political system strongly influence the likelihood of successful coercive democratization. In their "selectorate" theory, "[the motivation of the leader of the invading power] to retain power and the institutional context in which he or she operates play a major role in determining a state's policy choices."<sup>15</sup>

De Mesquita and Downs note that "an intervening democratic state is most interested in reversing the policies that precipitated its intervention in the first place," and mentions that sometimes creating a democracy is perceived as the most efficient way to do so by democratic leaders.<sup>16</sup> Following the logic of the selectorate theory, a leader might also be *less* interested in establishing a democracy if there is too much uncertainty in the ability for a democracy to take hold in a foreign nation. A failure on behalf of the intervening state to establish a democracy via regime change, for example, might actually *weaken* the intervening nation's leader politically at home, since the operation could be viewed as a waste of money and effort by the intervening nation's citizens if a democracy is not established in the invaded country.

This phenomenon, according to de Mesquita, encourages an intervening nation's leaders to establish friendly autocracies (or rigged democracies) in the

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<sup>15</sup> Bruce Bueno De Mesquita and George W. Downs, "Intervention and Democracy," *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (2006): p. 629, accessed July 6, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/3877822](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877822).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 631.

nation being subjected to regime change rather than attempt to fully democratize the target nation. Those autocracies/rigged democracies might be less beneficial for the people living in the nation than the prior autocratic power in practice, yet the intervening nation's leader might turn a blind eye to that conundrum if they can pitch the regime change endeavor as a "victory" to their constituents at home, leaving the nation they intervened in worse off in the process.

Essentially, de Mesquita's point is that occupying nations' leaders are more likely to engage in efforts to truly democratize a country if they perceive the establishment of a democracy in the occupied country as a.) more beneficial to the leader/nation as a whole (is the prospect of democratic elections good for the leader/nation or would the leader/nation be better served by a friendly autocrat) and b.) politically popular at home (would the citizens that elected the leader conducting the democratization be more satisfied with democratization of the target nation than regime change).

Similar to de Mesquita and Downs, Jonathan Monten and James Meernik also highlight the importance of particular indicators that occur after coercive democratization has begun. Monten argues that unless a state targets the underlying political institutions of a regime with its coercive democratization attempt and helps facilitate substantial pro-democracy reforms such as by sponsoring elections (which notably the U.S. did in Iraq), democratization is an unlikely outcome.<sup>17</sup> The tactics employed by the United States in Japan significantly differed from those

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Monten, "Intervention and State-Building: Comparative Lessons from Japan, Iraq, and Afghanistan," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 656 (2014): p. 175, accessed July 3, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/24541769](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24541769).

employed in Iraq insofar as reforming political institutions went. In the case of constitutional reforms, for example, the United States imposed a constitution upon the Japanese during occupation whereas in the case of Iraq the United States played the role of a mediator between various religious and ethnic interests in the crafting of an Iraqi constitution that was ultimately created by Iraqis.

Similarly, in Japan, the United States devoted considerable time and effort to fundamentally changing the economic and social structures present in Japan to make them suitable for a liberal democracy to flourish, whereas leadership change was clearly the primary goal of regime change in Iraq. For example, the United States engaged in major trust-busting and land reformation operations in occupied Japan whereas in Iraq, a recent college graduate was tasked with the incredibly complex task of reforming the Iraqi stock exchange.<sup>18</sup>

James Meernik puts forth a theory that the desire of the population experiencing regime change plays a factor in the outcome of coercive democratization efforts. Meernik argues that although there exists no conclusive data concerning the opinions of people who have had their country occupied by the United States before an occupation is already in place, it is possible to gauge a population's affinity for the United States' democratization attempts by analyzing how populations treat U.S. military and civilian personnel during occupations.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p. 289, (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> James Meernik, "United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy," *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 4 (1996): p. 399, accessed April 23, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/424565>.

Each of the given explanations are intriguing and convincing in their own ways, and the answer to the question of why coercive democratization succeeded in Japan yet failed in Iraq is most likely a product of a combination of the given hypotheses. In other words, there is no single answer that holistically explains the success of coercive democratization in Japan and the failure of coercive democratization in Iraq. Instead, there are multiple reasons for the success of coercive democratization in Japan and its failure in Iraq, including the policies implemented by the United States during its occupations of Japan and Iraq, the ethnic and religious makeups of Japan and Iraq, and the histories and internal stabilities/instabilities of Japan and Iraq.

### **A Preliminary Analysis of Coercive Democratization Theories to Japan and Iraq:**

As can be seen, a plenitude of theories that could describe the apparent success of regime change in Japan and the failure of regime change in Iraq have been put forward by academics. The ones that apply most clearly to the cases of Japan and Iraq and help us to understand the success seen in Japan and the failure seen in Iraq are Denison and Montan's theories concerning pre-existing governmental structures and an occupying country's occupation policies, as well as Pickering and Peceny's theories concerning a state's age and institutional ethnic conflict. The case of Iraq also strongly suggests that Meernik's theory concerning a target population's acceptance of its occupiers can be an important factor in the outcome of a coercive democratization attempt despite his inability to offer concrete proof of this being a universal truth. Likewise, de Mesquita's "selectorate"

theory appears relevant in light of the first-hand account of the Iraqi occupation from U.S. Ambassador Barbara Bodine who participated in the occupation as Coordinator for the Central Region of Iraq under ORHA that I was able to obtain via an interview. In the interview, Bodine suggested that Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld were more interested in installing a pro-U.S. government in Iraq than democratizing the country.

Denison and Monten both argue that “foreign regime-change operations are often ineffective and produce deleterious side effects.”<sup>20</sup> Denison’s point about the existence of strong governing institutions in a state prior to occupation as well as Monten’s point that an occupying country’s policies impact the outcome of coercive democratization attempts explain the success of the Japanese case well.<sup>21</sup>

For example, the U.S. did not have to create strong governing institutions in Japan as it has attempted to do in states that had weak governing apparatuses like Iraq. For example, when the United States occupied Japan following World War II, Japan boasted (and still boasts) the world’s oldest continuous hereditary monarchy and had been consistently expanding its territorial control for a decade when the military was essentially acting as the de facto governing body of Japan following its invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Even though the military exercised most political power in Japan from that point onward, the institutions of the Emperor and the Japanese Diet remained intact and operated somewhat normally during the

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<sup>20</sup> Denison, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, "Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013): p. 94, accessed April 24, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24480621>.

military's tenure as the ultimate arbiter of Japanese political power although fueling the Japanese war machine became their primary goal, thus aligning them with the military.<sup>22</sup> The fact that these institutions survived the military's seizure of power provided the United States with a basis from which to reform the Japanese political system, and the United States' decision to keep the Emperor position would prove beneficial for reasons explored in a later chapter.

On the other hand, when the United States entered Iraq in 2003, Iraq was essentially two countries (Kurdistan had been operating autonomously since 1991) and had experienced several changes in leadership since the Ottoman Empire fell in 1918. Pickering and Peceny's theory concerning state age also seems to be quite relevant in light of this factor, for Japan had existed for over 300 years as a sovereign nation before the United States occupied it whereas Iraq had only existed with its current boundaries for 71 years when the United States invaded in 2003 and had been plagued by leadership change and internal strife throughout its independence. The histories of these two countries will be analyzed in later chapters for their histories significantly influenced the outcome of the United States' attempts to democratize these two states.

Similarly, Hussein weakened his own government by continually conducting political purges of the military, even though his control of Iraq rested in the military's hands.<sup>23</sup> In other words, whereas the Japanese military had

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<sup>22</sup> Sheldon M Garon, "The Imperial Bureaucracy and Labor Policy in Postwar Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (1984): p. 442, accessed April 25, 2021, doi:10.2307/2055757.

<sup>23</sup> Ahmed Hashim, "Saddam Husayn and Civil-Military Relations in Iraq: The Quest for Legitimacy and Power," *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (2003): p. 20, accessed April 25, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329849>.



successfully kept Japan united, Saddam Hussein's Baathist government failed to retain control over a large portion of its territory and was plagued by routine purges which eroded the efficiency of Hussein's government. In fact, "the [governing institutions of Iraq] had effectively withdrawn from the detailed management of the country, except in a few vital areas necessary for the immediate survival and continuation of the regime," by the time the United States had invaded, meaning that institutionally the United States was left with very few options other than rebuilding the Iraqi government from scratch by the time it started its occupation of Iraq.<sup>24</sup>

Denison also argues that recent attempts to coercively democratize nations have been directed towards "weak states," such as Iraq, that lack these preconditions, thus resulting in the practice's continued failure.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of Japan, the fact that the U.S. only had to reform Japan's existing state institutions to promote liberalism makes the argument that existing strong governing institutions provide fertile grounds for coercive democratization to succeed very convincing. However, in the case of Iraq, this argument does not take into account the fact that the United States deprived the Iraqi state of many talented individuals via purging most qualified Iraqis from civil service positions due to their membership in the recently ousted Baath Party. In Japan, the political purges conducted by the United States left in place the vast majority of the Japanese bureaucracy and even the Emperor. It would appear that this particular difference

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<sup>24</sup> James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Benjamin Runkle, and Siddharth Mohandas, *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009), p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> Denison, p. 4.

in occupation policy had major impacts on the respective success and failure of the coercive democratization attempts in Japan and Iraq. The impacts of these crucial policy decisions will be explored in great depth in later chapters.

Similarly, the planning employed by the United States in Japan significantly differed from that which it employed in Iraq. The regime change operation in Japan was far better planned than the regime change operation that was ultimately pursued in Iraq. In the case of Japan, the United States had crafted a plan to democratize the country prior to its intervention and followed it through. In the case of Iraq, an in-depth plan to democratize the country was indeed formulated prior to the occupation, yet it was discarded by the United States, much to the detriment of the coercive democratization of Iraq as a whole. The reasons for the dismissal of the plan for democratizing Iraq that dealt a fatal blow to the operation will be explored further in a later chapter.

Pickering and Peceny's theory that the existence of institutional ethnic conflict hinders democratization also appear to be pertinent to the success of the coercive democratization attempt in Japan and the failure of the attempt pursued in Iraq. Japan is an ethnically homogenous society; 98% of the country is ethnically Japanese. As a result, ethnic discrimination has been somewhat of a non-issue in terms of the stability of Japanese society throughout its existence due to the fact that there is an overwhelming ethnic majority in the country that practically does not need to consider minority rights in its policy implementations. Religion also does not play a major role in Japanese society and most Japanese are practitioners of Shintoism and Buddhism. However, Iraq is a different case. Iraq is an ethnically

and religiously heterogeneous society. There are three sizeable ethnic and religious groups in Iraqi society, the Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'a, and Kurds, most of whom are Sunnis. They comprise about 20 percent, 60 percent, and 20 percent of Iraqi society respectively. Political power has also been concentrated in the hands of the Arab Sunnis, a minority group, for the entirety of the modern-day country of Iraq's existence and even before when it was part of the Ottoman Empire. The idea of ethnic and religious homo and heterogeneity will be discussed at length throughout the thesis for it is seemingly the most important factor in the success of coercive democratization in Japan and the failure of coercive democratization in Iraq.

Meernik's theory that a population's acceptance of a coercive democratization attempt is predicative of the democratization's success is perhaps more pertinent to Iraq than Japan, but it is worth entertaining. In the case of Japan, the Japanese were subject to an unconditional surrender which their leader, Emperor Hirohito, facilitated and accepted himself. There was little room left for the Japanese to resist U.S. occupation; the Japanese had suffered a total defeat in a war they instigated and had to suffer the consequences.

On the other hand, the Iraqis did not ask the United States to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Sure, several influential expatriates and perhaps some Shi'a and Kurds who had suffered at the hands of the Baathists might have truly desired an end to Hussein's regime, but the United States invaded Iraq of its own free will with an explicit intent to bring democracy to a people who had never asked for it. Even though Meernik ultimately comes to the conclusion that anti-U.S. sentiments among the target population in a coercive democratization attempt "[do] not appear

to be a crucial factor” in the democratization of a target nation, it is important to note that, at least in the case of Iraq (which had not occurred when Meernik wrote his work) it would appear that anti-U.S. sentiments, especially among the Sunni Arab population who felt unjustly targeted by U.S. occupation policies, played a significant role in the United States’ failure to democratize Iraq.<sup>26</sup>

De Mesquita and Downs’ theory pertaining to democratic leaders’ interests in democratizing autocratic states might be the most pessimistic theory concerning coercive democratization that this thesis entertains, but it does in fact warrant consideration given its particular applications to the case of Iraq. De Mesquita and Downs note that “an intervening democratic state is most interested in reversing the policies that precipitated its intervention in the first place,” and mentions that sometimes creating a democracy is perceived as the most efficient way to do so by democratic leaders.<sup>27</sup> Under his selectorate theory, the political leaders of the United States who orchestrated the establishment of democracies in Japan and Germany did so because the leaders of the United States figured that their citizens would not tolerate a resurgence in militarism in the former Axis Powers after having devoted an exorbitant amount of resources to winning a major war with the intent of eliminating militarism within Japan and Germany. In the case of Japan, the United States viewed creating a democracy as the easiest way to ensure that militarism was purged from Japanese society and appease its own people after putting them through the hardships of a costly war.

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<sup>26</sup> Meernik, p. 399.

<sup>27</sup> De Mesquita and Downs, p. 631.

Following the logic of the selectorate theory, a leader might also be *less* interested in establishing a democracy if there is too much uncertainty in the ability for a democracy to take hold in a foreign nation. A failure on behalf of the intervening state to establish a democracy via regime change, for example, might actually *weaken* the intervening nation's leader politically at home, since the operation could be viewed as a waste of money and effort by the intervening nation's citizens if a democracy is not established in the invaded country. This phenomenon, according to de Mesquita and Downs, encourages an intervening nation's leaders to establish friendly autocracies (or rigged democracies) in the nation being subjected to regime change rather than attempt to fully democratize the target nation.<sup>28</sup> Those autocracies/rigged democracies might be less beneficial for the people living in the nation than the prior autocratic power in practice, yet the intervening nation's leader might turn a blind eye to that conundrum if they can pitch the regime change endeavor as a "victory" to their constituents at home, leaving the nation they intervened in worse off in the process. Of particular importance to this thesis and its case study of Iraq is that U.S. Ambassador Barbara Bodine, Coordinator for the Central Region of Iraq during the initial invasion, subscribes to this theory insofar as the United States' coercive democratization attempt in Iraq goes. Bodine's argument will be presented in a later chapter.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 634.

## **Outline**

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on Japan prior to the United States' occupation. It will trace Japanese history from the Tokugawa Era (1603) to 1945 when the United States began its occupation. This time frame was selected since the state of Japan had been unified from this period onward. This chapter will focus primarily on the history of the Japanese state and attempt to identify any factors that could have contributed to the United States' successful coercive democratization of Japan.

The second chapter will delve into the United States' actual occupation of Japan. This section will answer key questions such as: Was the occupation of Japan planned? Were the occupation plans actualized? What specific policies or reforms did the United States implement in Japan during the occupation? Did the United States make any mistakes during the occupation? Essentially, a myriad of factors will be examined to help understand why the occupation of Japan was a success.

The third chapter will switch the focus of the thesis to Iraq. Much like with Japan, the history of Iraq will be analyzed for any factors that could have contributed to the failure of the coercive democratization attempt the United States conducted in Iraq. Since it is relevant to this thesis, the time frame for Iraq (1800-2003) will also include analyses of the territory that is now modern-day Iraq when it was both still a part of the Ottoman Empire prior to 1922 and when it was a colonial possession of the British from 1922-1932. It would not do the analysis of Iraq justice to exclude its history as part of the Ottoman Empire and as

a colonial possession since many of the issues modern-day Iraq faces are quite similar to the issues the Iraq of the Ottoman Empire and colonial Iraq faced. Likewise, since the history of Japan is traced back nearly 300 years, it is appropriate to elongate the time frame of analyses for Iraq past its modern-day iteration since Iraq has only been an independent nation for 89 years to make the comparison more equal.

The fourth chapter will, as the second chapter does with Japan, analyze the actual occupation of Iraq by the United States. This chapter will feature a section dedicated to highlighting any differences between the United States' coercive democratization attempts in Japan and Iraq in order to isolate variables that could have contributed to the success experienced in Japan and the failure experienced in Iraq. It will address the same questions that the second chapter seeks to answer in relation to Japan, with a focus on highlighting aspects of the United States' occupation of Iraq that contributed to its failure.

The fifth chapter will feature the conclusion to the thesis, in which the research questions, being, why did the United States' coercive democratization attempt succeed in post-WWII Japan yet fail in Iraq and were there specific internal conditions for the coercive democratization attempts in Japan and Iraq that contributed to the attempts' respective success and failure, will be answered. Here, any differences between the two countries' histories or experiences with occupation under the United States will be compared to identify the key factors that contributed to the success of coercive democratization in Japan and its failure in Iraq.

The overall findings of the thesis are that the United States' failure to democratize Iraq via coercion and its successful coercive democratization of Japan was the result of both external and internal factors. Insofar as external factors go, the United States did not devote an adequate amount of resources to the coercive democratization effort in Iraq and made several serious blunders in how it handled the occupation itself policy-wise. While the United States did make some arguably bad decisions in the case of the occupation of Japan, these blunders were not debilitating and were far outweighed by the good decisions made in the coercive democratization effort in Japan.

Concerning internal factors, the relative historic stability of Japan as well as the country's homogeneity appear to have positively influenced the coercive democratization of Japan whereas the historic instability of Iraq and its heterogeneity appear to have hindered the coercive democratization effort in Iraq. In essence, the presence or absence of these external and internal factors led to the success of coercive democratization of Japan and the failed coercive democratization of Iraq.



## Chapter 2: Japan Before Occupation

Japan has historically embraced a tradition of “[realism, opportunism, respect for power, and [a] pursuit of status and autonomy],” from the country’s origins as a hodgepodge collection of warring states to its modern-day status as a unified nation.<sup>29</sup> Even though Japan is an incredibly old state with various periods of unification and disunion peppering its history, Japan had existed as a relatively unified country for over 300 years prior to the United States’ occupation of the country in 1945.

There are four main periods of Japanese history that transpired in the centuries prior to the United States’ occupation of Japan following the country’s defeat during World War II in which the entirety of Japan was under the control of a centralized government and in which the Japanese ethos, so to speak, is clearly on display. Those periods are called the Tokugawa, Meiji, Taisho, and Showa eras. Of particular relevance is the fact that from the beginning of the Tokugawa era in 1603 until the start of World War II in 1941 when Japan embraced fascism and allied itself with the Axis Powers, Japan was a relatively stable, unified nation internally.

The relative internal stability of Japan from the Tokugawa era onward is largely due to the homogeneity of the country (about 98% of people living in Japan are ethnically Japanese) as well as an overwhelmingly accepted social and political culture that emphasizes the health of the nation, or collective, and social

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<sup>29</sup> Kenneth B Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2008, p. 23.

cohesion over individualism and diversity of thought and culture.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the majority of Japanese practice either Shintoism, Buddhism, or both.<sup>31</sup> Shintoism is primarily a system of ancestral worship that offers no stringent moral code for its followers to observe and Japanese Buddhism focuses primarily on the harmony of the soul meaning that religious zealotry, violent or otherwise, was not widespread in the country.<sup>32,33</sup> Political dissent was present in some form throughout each of the aforementioned eras of unified control in Japan, yet the country never dissolved and remained under the control of a central authority throughout each of these eras.

Likewise, Japan's geographic status as an island nation, while becoming a curse once Japan fully embraced an expansionist mantra during World War II due to the lack of natural resources on the islands of Japan, made the nation hard to access, thus limiting the threat of invasion and colonization. In essence, these factors combined contributed to the unified governance of Japan from the Tokugawa era onward.

Similarly, the relative political and social stability of the nation no doubt benefited from the facts that Japan was never colonized or occupied until World War II and that Japan self-consciously cut itself off from Western trade and religion until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century which limited the diversity of thought and

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<sup>30</sup> "The World Factbook: Japan," Central Intelligence Agency, February 1, 2018, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Shinjiro Kitasawa, "Shintoism and the Japanese Nation," *The Sewanee Review* 23, no. 4 (1915): p. 482, accessed December 8, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27532848>.

<sup>33</sup> Tōru Yasumoto, "Buddhism and the Japanese Mind," *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 3, no. 4 (1962): p. 308, accessed December 8, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30233873>.

culture present in Japan and helped foster the growth of nationalism among the Japanese.

### **The Tokugawa Era (1603-1867)**

In 1603, samurai warrior Tokugawa Ieyasu was appointed shogun, or supreme military leader, of Japan by the country's largely symbolic imperial court after defeating his rivals for the throne in various battles. Ieyasu's appointment brought an end to the Warring States Period (1467-1615) in Japan which was characterized by internal warfare between regional warlords, or daimyo, and resulted in peaceful shogunate rule of a unified Japan for 264 years.

During the Tokugawa era, the Japanese implemented multiple reforms that were geared towards preserving the unity of Japan. The feudalist/federalist form of government embraced by the Tokugawa shogunate saw Japanese society become intensely stratified with the shogunate/samurai at the top of the internal political hierarchy followed by artisans, merchants, and peasants.<sup>34</sup> Within this feudalist/federalist system, about 260 regional daimyos, in exchange for swearing fealty to the Tokugawa shogunate, were allowed to control about 75% of the country's land.<sup>35</sup> Although a system with such a diffusion of authority might seem to be fertile grounds for promoting instability, the Tokugawa era saw no major

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<sup>34</sup> Isabella Steger, "The Complicated Legacy of Modern Japan as It Celebrates Its 150th Birthday," Quartz (Quartz, October 22, 2018), accessed November 20, 2019, <https://qz.com/1423834/modern-japan-is-turning-150-heres-what-you-need-to-know/>.

<sup>35</sup> David L. Howell, Michael Auslin, and Carl Mosk, "Japan," In *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World*, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 1, accessed November 20, 2019, [https://international.uiowa.edu/sites/international.uiowa.edu/files/file\\_uploads/japan\\_in\\_tokugawa\\_period\\_and\\_modernity.pdf](https://international.uiowa.edu/sites/international.uiowa.edu/files/file_uploads/japan_in_tokugawa_period_and_modernity.pdf).

military conflicts within Japan throughout its 264 year duration.<sup>36</sup> While Japanese society was indeed based around the idea of a rigid four-class hierarchy that venerated the samurai class, the “essential equality of each status group's function in the political order” was recognized by the Tokugawa shogunate and the nation’s laws were, “impartially and justly executed.”<sup>37,38</sup>

The Tokugawa shogunate were vehemently opposed to any outside influence and effectively shut off Japanese society from the rest of the world, especially European powers. For example, the Tokugawa shogunate instituted a formal ban on Christianity within Japan and relegated all trading with European nations to a single port in Nagasaki.<sup>39</sup>

The demise of the Tokugawa era was brought about by a perception among the citizenry that the Tokugawa shogunate were incapable of resisting domination by Western powers following the forced opening of Japan by the United States’ Navy in 1853 by Commodore Matthew Perry, who intimidated the Japanese into opening up their market to the United States. Once Perry’s demands were met, other Western powers demanded the same access to the Japanese market. The shogunate’s complying with the demands of the U.S. and other western powers served as a radicalizing factor for young samurai and encouraged Japan to turn towards an imperial style of rule by transforming the historically respected, yet largely symbolic, position of Emperor into one that commanded

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> John W. Hall, "Rule by Status in Tokugawa Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1, no. 1 (1974): p. 39, accessed November 20, 2020, doi:10.2307/133436.

<sup>39</sup> Howell, et. al, p. 2.

absolute authority and cast away the Tokugawa era's form of federalism-tinged feudalism.

### **The Meiji Restoration (1868-1912)**

Emperor Meiji's ascendance to the throne in 1868 with the aid of the Choshu and Satsuma feudal domains began the Meiji Era in Japanese history which saw Japan undergo substantial political reforms and embrace aspects of Western cultures and institutions. After the embarrassment suffered by the Japanese following Commodore Perry's opening of Japan to the West and the shogunate's signing of unequal treaties, especially in the realm of trade, with Western powers, the Japanese were desperate to prove to the West that the Japanese people should be viewed as equals and reverse the unequal treaties.<sup>40</sup>

The Japanese government became more highly centralized than ever before during the Meiji era and saw the Japanese implement policies such as universal conscription, compulsory education, and a new land tax in order to put Japan in a better position to compete on an international level.<sup>41</sup> As Kenneth Pyle notes in his book, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, the Japanese's desire for national unity in order to preserve Japanese autonomy and define Japan as a major player in the international system necessitated that "foreign policy *was* domestic policy," during the Meiji era.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Pyle, p. 80

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

Despite the Japanese's success in fostering nationalism within the nation, dissent was present during the Meiji reforms, the bloodiest of which was led by one of the Meiji Restoration's key architects, Saigō Takamori. Takamori and the disgruntled samurai he led were disaffected due to the Meiji government's dismantling of the "Tokugawa status system and its privileges, [granted to the samurai] such as the right to bear two swords."<sup>43</sup> Takamori's forces, along with the movement to preserve the Tokugawa system, were defeated by the Meiji government's conscripted forces.

Similarly, the Meiji government faced pressure from a contingency of former samurai, the peasantry, and journalists to adopt a parliamentary democracy. This movement was known as The Popular Rights Movement, and its members generally protested peacefully. The Meiji government ended up co-opting the movement to limit its influence by offering a series of strategic concessions to the group, the most notable of which was the creation of a constitution.<sup>44</sup> Despite the creation of a constitution in 1899, as well as the establishment of a national legislature, the Imperial Diet, in 1890, "Japan remained fundamentally undemocratic."<sup>45</sup> For example, the constitution, "subordinated [individual] rights to the needs of the state," and the right to vote was limited to about one percent of the population, all of whom were land-owning men.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Howell, et. al, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

## **Taisho Era (1912-1926)**

The Taisho era was characterized by a flirtation with democracy and a descent into totalitarianism. Before 1925, only men who had paid at least 15 yen in property taxes were afforded the right to vote in Japan, amounting to approximately one percent of the population. As a result of popular pressure, the right to vote was expanded to include all men in 1925 and two major political parties formed, the center right Minseito party and the conservative Seiyukai, the leaders of which took turns as premier.<sup>47</sup> Both the Minseito and Seiyukai parties were supported by the privileged classes, such as the samurai families and big business.<sup>48</sup> Where the parties differed was in the fact that the Minseito were more adamant in supporting industrial interests (one of the major supporters of the party was the Mitsubishi family) whereas the Seiyukai party represented the interests of the landed elite.<sup>49</sup>

Discontent with the two major parties was commonplace in the Taisho era. Kenneth Colegrove writes in his work, "Labor Parties in Japan," that there, "seem[ed] to be widespread contempt for the venality of both parties" among the commoners.<sup>50</sup> For example, the Siemens Scandal of 1914, which involved European companies bribing naval officials to purchase European naval technology, resulted in violent protests in Tokyo. While the bribes were problematic to the Japanese people, the fact that the Imperial Diet was planning

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Colegrove, "Labor Parties in Japan," *The American Political Science Review* 23, no. 2 (1929): p. 329, accessed December 6, 2020. doi:10.2307/1945218.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 330.

on raising taxes to pay for the acquisition of the naval technology was the major factor in inspiring the protests.<sup>51</sup>

Likewise, a commonly-read Japanese newspaper, *Jiji Shimpō*, claimed that the old parties, “[made] a plaything of politics and treacherously [threw] dirt in the eyes of the nation.”<sup>52</sup> In fact, the expansion of the vote to all males gave way to the formation of various “proletariat” parties and resulted in the election of eight of these proletariat candidates to the Imperial Diet within the first year of universal male suffrage.<sup>53</sup> The practical power of these proletariat parties was fairly limited, and there is a strong argument to be made that the conservative nature of Japanese culture played a major role in weakening the appeal of these proletariat parties.

Industrialization in Japan, occurring from 1890-1930, saw more people leave the countryside for the cities and resulted in the proliferation of poor tenants in Japanese cities who worked in textile or shipbuilding factories.<sup>54</sup> The movement of people into the cities from farms was spurred on by the Great Depression, which destroyed the market for Japanese silk.<sup>55</sup> However, the unionization of labor, oftentimes considered a hallmark of the proliferation of liberal/socialist movements, was unable to occur in Japan due to the lack of

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<sup>51</sup> Edzard Janssen, “German-Japanese Cooperation in the Japanese Telecommunication Industry: The Case of Siemens, Fuji Electric and Fujitsu,” *Senri Ethnological Studies* 52 (March 29, 2000): pp. 51-64, <https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.15021/00002856>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> “Japan's Modern History: An Outline of the Period: Asia for Educators: Columbia University,” Japan's Modern History: An Outline of the Period | Asia for Educators | Columbia University, accessed January 3, 2021, [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/japan\\_modern\\_timeline.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/japan_modern_timeline.htm).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



codified labor union protections under Japanese law and the routine suppression of strikes by the Japanese police.<sup>56</sup>

For example, Colegrove mentions in his article that, “there appeare[ed] [to be] little evidence of class-consciousness among the wage-earners of Japan.”<sup>57</sup> In essence, the two major parties were able to court the votes of the proletariat parties’ presumed bases (tenants and farmers) due to the “mark[ed] conservat[ism]” of the Japanese peasant.<sup>58</sup> Colegrove notes that the progressive parties of Japan, such as the Japanese Farmers’ Union, failed to win broad bases of support despite the vote being expanded to all men and advocating for policies, such as imposing “super-taxes” on the rich and legalizing strikes, that would directly benefit the lower classes.<sup>59</sup>

Despite some elections of parties representing various interests, assassinations of and assaults on political figures severely limited the ability of democracy to flourish in Japan and national unity cabinets headed by military members became more common than party rule.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the Japanese government actively took steps to limit political discourse when it enacted the Peace Preservation law in 1925 which criminalized advocating to change the Emperor system.<sup>61</sup> This law was aimed at undermining Japanese proletariat parties (it was passed in the same year suffrage was expanded to all men), yet it

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Howell, et. al, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

resulted in the dogma of the state being so untouchable that parties became moot.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the Taisho era had some of the underpinnings of democracy, yet the highly centralized Japanese government hindered and eventually killed democracy in Japan during the era.

### **Pre-Occupation Showa Era (1926-1945)**

A myriad of factors contributed to the descent into fascism that Japan experienced during the Showa era. One major factor that permitted Japan to pursue “aggression abroad and repression at home,” was the strength of the Japanese military in comparison to other governmental agencies.<sup>63</sup> Throughout Japan’s industrialization period from about 1890 to 1930, various governmental forces vied for the favor of the Emperor, including the parliament, the bureaucracy, and the military.<sup>64</sup> The military would ultimately succeed in steering Japanese politics due to its actions abroad. For example, members of the Kwantung Army within the Japanese Imperial Army, acting autonomously, instigated the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 by blowing up a section of the South Manchurian Railway near the city of Mukden and blaming it on Chinese soldiers.<sup>65</sup> This event, known as the Mukden Incident, was not approved by the Imperial Diet and led to the Kwantung Army’s ensuing occupation of Manchuria

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “Japan's Modern History: An Outline of the Period: Asia for Educators: Columbia University.”

<sup>65</sup> Sandra Wilson, "The Manchurian Crisis and Moderate Japanese Intellectuals: The Japan Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations," *Modern Asian Studies* 26, no. 3 (1992): p. 508, accessed December 8, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/312552>.

while solidifying the Imperial Army's grip on the country by accomplishing a feat that could not be ignored.

Similarly, economic instability within Japan following World War I, as well as the Great Depression, shook the faith of the Japanese in both free-market capitalism and adversarial, democratic party systems. The early Showa era was characterized by a transition from agricultural work to white and blue-collar jobs by the Japanese as well as a decline in industrial output due to the conclusion of the first World War and the Great Depression.

Likewise, as Masataka Kosaka states in his work, "The Showa Era (1926-1989)," "Japanese party politics became blatantly corrupt," as politicians practiced "unabashed pork barreling" to their constituents while simultaneously neglecting "the welfare of society as a whole."<sup>66</sup> For example, funding for high schools and colleges in elite urban centers was pushed through by the Diet whereas no long-term plans were created to alleviate the suffering of rural Japanese.<sup>67</sup> The Imperial Army recruited most of its fighting force and received most of its supplies from rural villages, and thus was "disturbed by the gap between rural poverty and urban prosperity," seeing the "individualism" fostered in cities by a modernizing elite as detrimental to nationalism.<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, the changing perception of imperialism in the global arena from accepted to unacceptable following World War I interfered with Japan's idea of

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<sup>66</sup> Masataka, Kosaka, "The Showa Era (1926-1989)." *Daedalus* 119, no. 3 (1990): p. 31, accessed December 8, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025315>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

creating a regional hegemony in East Asia with itself at the center. The military was summarily threatened by this change in the global tolerance of imperialism. This was especially true considering the fact that the Japanese military had proven itself capable of being a colonial power that could compete with the West in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 when Japan gained Korea as a colonial possession. Likewise, other European powers still retained their own colonial possessions.

In other words, the liberal democratic values of the West had become, in the Japanese's eyes, constraints on the nation's ability to prosper as native supporters of Western ideals proved themselves unable to offer solutions to the problems presented by rural poverty and changes in the international system and, in turn, accept the consolidation of power in the hands of the military and an all-powerful Emperor in order to preserve nationalism and the Japanese's dream of a globally-relevant Japan.<sup>69,70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Masakazu Yamazaki, "The Intellectual Community of the Showa Era," *Daedalus* 119, no. 3 (1990): 245-64, accessed December 8, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025327>.

### Chapter 3: The Coercive Democratization of Japan

The United States began formulating a plan for the occupation of Japan long before Japan had surrendered to the Allied forces in 1945. As early as 1943 the U.S. Department of State was pondering several questions concerning the occupation of Japan including topics such as the size of the occupation force that would be needed, the form the occupation would take, how long the occupation would be, what the political objectives of the Military Government in occupied Japan would be, and whether or not the Institution of the Emperor should be retained.<sup>71</sup>

In theory, the occupation of Japan was an international affair conducted at the behest of the Allied Powers but in practice the occupation of Japan was administered by the United States alone.<sup>72</sup> One man in particular, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, commanded extensive authority over the occupation process due to the duality of his positions as both the Commander in Chief of the United States Forces in the Far East Command as well as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, or SCAP, which is used as both an international title for MacArthur and a name for the “almost exclusively” American force that ended up occupying Japan by scholars.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>“Japan: General Principles Applicable to the Post-War Settlement with Japan (T-357),” (Larger image) | Birth of the Constitution of Japan, accessed March 25, 2021. [https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/001/001\\_001.html](https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/001/001_001.html).

<sup>72</sup> John W. Masland, "Post-War Government and Politics of Japan," *The Journal of Politics* 9, no. 4 (1947): p. 566, accessed March 22, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2125732>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

The State Department started planning for the post-war occupation of Japan in 1943 in a document titled “Japan: General Principles Applicable to the Post-War Settlement With Japan.” The first goal stated in the 1943 document concerned relieving Japan of its colonial possessions of Manchuria, Korea and Formosa. The second goal was to prevent Japan from becoming a threat to international peace via disarming Japan.<sup>74</sup> The third goal was to ensure that once Japan had sufficiently satisfied the conditions of its surrender (namely embracing democracy and dissolving its military) that the country would have equal access to the global market.<sup>75</sup> In other words, Japan’s economy was not to be permanently crippled by an excessively punitive occupation or lengthy sanctions. The fourth goal was to install a government in Japan that would respect the rights of other states, especially in regard to state sovereignty. Lastly, the document declares the restoration of Japan’s “full and equal membership in a family of nations bound together by an international organization and protected by an effective security system,” as the occupation’s ultimate goal.<sup>76</sup> In other words, the plan for post-war Japan was to punish the country for its transgressions while at the same time setting the country up for success in the international community.

In a later document from 1944, these goals were integrated into three distinct periods that provided the framework for the occupation. The first two periods of occupation were explicitly concerned with protecting Allied (in

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<sup>74</sup> “Japan: General Principles Applicable to the Post-War Settlement with Japan (T-357),” (Larger image) | Birth of the Constitution of Japan, accessed March 25, 2021. [https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/001/001\\_001l.html](https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/001/001_001l.html).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

particular the United States') interests. For example, the first period was to be harsh and focused on stripping Japan of its military capabilities and the territories it had acquired since World War I, as well as placing Japan under "military occupation and government."<sup>77</sup> Likewise, the second period of occupation largely focused on implementing what the Department of State dubbed "measures designed to eradicate militarism" within Japanese society.<sup>78</sup> These measures included establishing U.S. military bases in Japan in order to prevent Japanese aggression and to police the populace, placing economic controls on the Japanese economy in the name of preventing the development of "war potential," encouraging "democratic thought" through means such as the press, media, and schools, and "rooting out ultra-nationalistic societies."<sup>79</sup> The third and final period of occupation was left vague in the Department of State's document, but acknowledged the necessity of altering Japan's political and economic structures to compensate for the dissolution of the Japanese Empire and the resulting loss of Japan's dependencies.<sup>80</sup>

As would be the case almost sixty years later in Iraq, Pyle notes that, "[m]ost of the Americans who participated in the [o]ccupation lacked any clear understanding of Japan's

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

history and culture.”<sup>81</sup> In fact, one major drawback concerning the occupation of Japan was the fact that positions of authority went almost exclusively to general staff officers rather than to the nearly 2,000 highly specialized military government officers who were deployed to Japan to help with the occupation. In fact, many of these highly specialized personnel were unable to penetrate the “brass curtain” surrounding the Chief of Staff and were eventually replaced by civilians who were underqualified for their roles and more apt to be yes-men rather than innovators, leaving power concentrated in the hands of MacArthur and other military men.<sup>82</sup> The decisions made by MacArthur had very long-term effects on both Japanese economics and politics, as will be discussed in the following sections.

### **Economic Changes**

Reformation of the Japanese economy was a priority for the United States for two reasons: the idea of disarmament and preventing Japan from becoming a leech on the American taxpayer via having a weak economy. In the years leading

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<sup>81</sup> Pyle, Chapter Seven.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.



up to the United States' occupation of Japan, the Japanese had devoted most of the country's industrial capacities to fueling the Japanese war machine so that Japan could retain and gain more colonial possessions.<sup>83</sup> The United States also wanted to make Japan self-sufficient to a degree and therefore mandated that the Japanese bureaucracy place controls over wages and prices so as to make the demand feasible for the war-torn country.<sup>84</sup>

However, the United States also refrained from completely liberalizing the Japanese economy, leaving in place many business monopolies. In prewar Japan the banks owned by the zaibatsu groups Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Yasuda (Japanese conglomerates headed by powerful Japanese families that functioned like monopolies due to their ownership of several related companies within an industry as well as their influence in the banking industry) issued 74.9 percent of all loans in the country.<sup>85</sup> In 1958, about 26.2 percent of loans were issued by zaibatsu-controlled banks, meaning that a sizable portion of the Japanese economy still was being influenced by a few strong conglomerates and families following the United States' occupation. The residual power of these prewar groups in Japan is due to the fact that SCAP realized that completely smashing the zaibatsu would remove, "the ablest and most successful leaders of [Japan]" and therefore hinder the economic recovery of Japan and further burden

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<sup>83</sup> Hugh Borton, "American Occupation Policies in Japan," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 22, no. 4 (1948): p. 41, accessed April 6, 2021. doi:10.2307/1172867.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42.

<sup>85</sup> Kozo Yamamura, "Zaibatsu, Prewar and Zaibatsu, Postwar," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 4 (1964): p. 540, accessed March 25, 2021, doi:10.2307/2050237.

the American taxpayer.<sup>86</sup> In other words, despite the clear gains made in demonopolizing Japan by the United States, Japan's economy was still significantly impacted by an influential few following occupation due to the United States' prioritization of making Japan economically viable over completely liberalizing the Japanese economy as well as the conservative Japanese political parties and bureaucrats affording large business interests preferential subsidies, trade preferences, and tax regulations.<sup>87</sup>

While the decision not to dismantle the zaibatsu had the effect of protecting the influence of a small handful of businesses and families at the expense of the average Japanese civilian, the United States' efforts in land reformation significantly improved the status of many impoverished Japanese citizens. Prior to the United States' occupation of Japan, only one-third of the nation's farmers owned all of the land that they farmed.<sup>88</sup> The other two-thirds of farmers either completely rented their farmable land or owned some very tiny, scattered plots and rented the rest of their land.<sup>89</sup> The resulting impact of the land situation in Japan was rent equaling nearly half of the gross value of farmers' annual yields, trapping farmers in a cycle of subsistence and a low standard of living even in years in which crop yields were good and prices were high.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Philip H. Taylor, "The Administration of Occupied Japan," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 267 (1950): p. 149, accessed March 22, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1026736>.

<sup>87</sup> Masland, p. 579.

<sup>88</sup> R. P. Dore, "The Japanese Land Reform in Retrospect," *Far Eastern Survey* 27, no. 12 (1958): p. 183, accessed March 25, 2021. doi:10.2307/3023953.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

In fact, land reform had even been on the table in Imperial Japan before occupation due to a recognition that continued agrarian distress due to the master-servant relationship between landlords and tenants would eventually broaden the appeal of Communism in the country.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, the United States' fear of a communist Japan motivated the country to aggressively pursue land reformation as a means to prevent the ideology from gaining traction in Japan. During occupation, the United States made the Japanese government purchase (at cheap prices) all of the land held by absentee tenants and most of the land of leased-out landlords and sell it to the farmers actually tending the land.<sup>92</sup> The U.S. also set limits on the amount of land an individual farmer could own and the amount of land a landlord could rent to any one farmer.<sup>93</sup> The United States' land reformation policies alleviated the financial burden on farmers and significantly combated the pervasive "agrarian discontent" which was theorized to have significantly helped propagate Japanese aggression abroad as Japanese leaders increasingly had to compensate for social injustice at home with glory abroad to appease the Japanese lower class.<sup>94</sup>

### **Political Changes**

While economic reforms imposed on Japan by the United States during occupation certainly helped shape the future of the country, the most significant changes to Japan came in the form of how the United States handled

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<sup>91</sup> Masland, p. 582.

<sup>92</sup> Dore, p. 184.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

altering the Japanese political system. Political reformatations that the United States implemented in Japan simultaneously pushed the country towards democracy while maintaining the idea that the Japanese still controlled their own destiny to a degree. For example, one major decision that must be made when a new political regime is created is how to handle bureaucrats and high-ranking politicians who served in the previous regime. In the case of post-2003 Iraq, Coalition Provisional Authority leader L. Paul Bremer's decision to exclude members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party from government employment was widely seen as a crucial error, because it deprived large numbers of people who had joined the Baath Party only out of a desire for self-preservation from putting their skills and knowledge of government affairs to use in post-Saddam Iraq.

In the case of Japan, General MacArthur, acting upon orders from the United States, chose to administer Japan indirectly through the existing Japanese governmental apparatus, including the Japanese Emperor. In other words, the United States did not dismantle the Japanese bureaucracy, instead opting to rule Japan ad hoc by issuing orders to the Emperor or the Imperial Government who were then expected to carry out SCAP's orders. The United States did indeed "purge the military and political elites and conducted war crimes trials" to hold Japanese leaders accountable for their crimes against humanity during World War II, but "left almost the entire civilian bureaucracy intact," which ultimately became the major power in postwar Japanese politics.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Pyle, p. 220.

200,000 Japanese were initially barred from political office by MacArthur (most of those purged were high-ranking military officials but it is important to note that Communist Party leadership was purged too “on the grounds that they advocated antidemocratic violence”) in 1950 in a purge dubbed, “The Removal and Exclusion of Undesirable Personnel from Public Office.”<sup>96</sup> The vast majority of those purged under this edict were de-purged the following year by MacArthur’s successor, General Matthew Ridgeway.<sup>97</sup> By the time Japan was granted independence in 1952, all of those purged under this edict had been de-purged and were allowed to participate in politics once again.<sup>98</sup> While the political purges that occurred in Japan are seemingly light-handed, it is important to note that as many as 6,000 Japanese were tried for brutality against Allied POWs, 900 of whom were convicted and executed.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, notable military commanders, such as General Homma Masahura who allowed the Bataan Death March of 1942 to occur in which thousands of American and Filipino POWs perished on an arduous march to a prison camp, did not escape punishment and were executed.<sup>100</sup> In other words, the most heinous offenders did indeed pay for their crimes, yet those who indirectly participated in the war or operated at the behest of a commander were generally spared and even reintegrated into Japanese society and politics.

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<sup>96</sup> Peter K. Frost, “Debating the Allied Occupation of Japan (Part One),” *Education About Asia* 21, no. 2 (2016), p. 60.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

The United States also gave the Japanese people and government ample opportunities to govern themselves and implement directives on their own rather than have the U.S. occupying forces control every artery of the Japanese government from the top down.<sup>101</sup> The United States' occupying forces were there primarily to ensure compliance on behalf of the Japanese if necessary, rather than to serve as a governing apparatus.

In fact, General MacArthur found that keeping Emperor Hirohito in power was particularly useful in transforming Japanese society. It is important to note that prior to the United States' occupation of their country, the vast majority of Japanese people subscribed to the idea that the Emperor served as a "semimystical symbol of Japan's *kokutai*," which translates to national unity.<sup>102</sup> In fact, Japanese officials routinely "boasted of citizens who had "risked death to save the Emperor's picture from destruction or even commit[ted] suicide when they failed."<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the infamous suicidal *kamikaze* and *banzai* attacks the Japanese employed during World War II were committed in the Emperor's name.<sup>104</sup> In other words, the Japanese people were clearly committed to the institution of the Emperor.

In particular, McArthur noted that Hirohito was an invaluable asset insofar as the attainment of SCAP's goals went. For example, MacArthur expressed pleasure over Emperor Hirohito's renunciation of his prior claims of religious

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<sup>101</sup>Taylor, p. 141.

<sup>102</sup> Frost, p. 59.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

superiority in the Emperor's 1946 New Year's speech as well as Hirohito's "general support of SCAP policies" and his "willingness to meet the public."<sup>105</sup> Due to the United States' Senate's desire to try Hirohito as a war criminal, MacArthur, knowing the strategic value of having Hirohito at his disposal, actually defended retaining the Emperor on the grounds that he would need "at least a million" more troops to maintain the peace in Japan should Hirohito be tried, laying the issue to rest.<sup>106</sup>

Although many Japanese bureaucrats and the Emperor were retained, that is not to say that all of the United States' decisions regarding the democratization of Japan were infallible. For example, as would be the case in Iraq, "[m]ost of the Americans who participated in the [o]ccupation lacked any clear understanding of Japan's history and culture."<sup>107</sup> In fact, one major drawback concerning the occupation of Japan was the fact that positions of authority went almost exclusively to general staff officers rather than to the nearly 2,000 highly specialized military government officers who were deployed to Japan to help with the occupation. In fact, many of these highly specialized personnel were unable to penetrate the "brass curtain" surrounding the Chief of Staff and were eventually replaced by civilians who were underqualified for their roles and more apt to be yes-men rather than innovators, leaving power concentrated in the hands of MacArthur and other military men.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Pyle, Chapter Seven.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Another key decision made in the democratization effort in Japan was holding the first post-war election in 1946 before ultranationalists were removed from political power (the purge occurred in 1950). This particular decision might have been a mistake in hindsight due to the long-term impact it had on the development of democracy in Japan since it resulted in the “reactionary old guard’s control over the new governmental structure remain[ing] as potent as it had been in preoccupied Japan,” especially since the existing Japanese bureaucracy consisted of many of the same individuals who had been employed by Imperial Japan.<sup>109</sup> In fact, General MacArthur and the conservative generals who served as his staff actually ended up cracking down on the burgeoning left-of-center political parties, such as the Japanese Communist Party, that sprang up during occupation rather than on the more conservative bureaucrats due to fears concerning the sweeping economic and political reforms that these parties advocated for.<sup>110</sup> SCAP actively encouraged the Japanese government to limit the operations of these left-of-center movements by condoning placing limitations on the press and trade unions, effectively solidifying the control that the conservative Japanese old guard held over the country.<sup>111</sup> For example, the Japanese press was censored by SCAP and was prohibited from publishing articles that “interfered with public tranquility.”<sup>112</sup> Censored material included reporting on the effects of

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<sup>109</sup> Taylor, p. 147.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Eric Johnston, “75 Years on, Legacy of the U.S.-Led Occupation of Japan Still Resonates,” *The Japan Times*, August 30, 2020, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/08/30/national/us-occupation-japan-wwii-anniversary/>.



radiation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as articles containing “destructive criticism” of the United States’ occupation.<sup>113</sup>

Perhaps the most influential decision made by the United States concerning the occupation of Japan was the decision by the United States to impose a constitution on the Japanese rather than have the Japanese create their own new constitution. Due to the fact that the United States was crystal clear to the Japanese that revising the Meiji Constitution was a matter of “prime importance” following the Japanese’s unconditional surrender on September 2, 1945, the Japanese had begun working on their own revisions as early as October of the same year.<sup>114</sup> The first effort at Japanese constitutional drafting was led by Prince Konoe, a Japanese politician who had vehemently opposed the army’s takeover of Japan and the entrance of Japan into war with the Anglo-American powers during the 1940s.<sup>115</sup>

Konoe’s revisions to the Meiji Constitution (as well as subsequent ones designed by the Japanese) were thrown out by the Americans due to the inability of Konoe and his colleagues to remedy the problems with the Meiji constitution that arose from the document’s exaltation of the Emperor since the exaltation of one man was deemed antithetical to democracy by the Americans. This lead General MacArthur to settle into the mentality that “the most effective method of instructing the Japanese Government on the nature and application of [democratic] principles would be to prepare a model constitution embodying those principles.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Robert E. Ward, "The Origins of the Present Japanese Constitution," *The American Political Science Review* 50, no. 4 (1956): p. 984, accessed March 24, 2021, doi:10.2307/1951331.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 986.

Part of the rationale for abandoning the hands-off approach to the revision of the Japanese constitution was to solidify U.S. control of the occupation. Since the occupation of Japan was technically an international ordeal on behalf of the Allied Powers, in addition to the American-dominated SCAP, there was an international body, the Far Eastern Committee, that formed due to British and Soviet desires to have a bigger say in the occupation of Japan, that contended for a role in shaping Japan's future.<sup>117</sup> By expediting the adoption of a constitution by the Japanese via drafting one for them, the United States was essentially able to circumvent both the British and the Soviets' inputs, therefore securing near absolute control over the direction in which Japan would democratize. The imposition of a constitution on the Japanese, however, would cause political turmoil later on in Japan's history, especially the inclusion of the controversial Article 9 which relegated Japan's armed services to a small Self-Defense Force.

Although many of these decisions directly contributed to the continued stability of Japan during and after occupation, one can hardly say that Japan was a true democracy following the United States' occupation. This is especially the case when examining Japan's first election during occupation in 1946. While the political purges did result in the expulsion of many key offenders from political office (such as the conservative Liberal Party's, which is very closely tied to the zaibatsu, bureaucracy, and the royal family, founder, Ichiro Hatoyama) and the revival of prewar parties, the purges happened after the first post-war election, meaning that the purge did not have a significant impact on the Japanese political

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 988.

sphere.<sup>118</sup> For example, in the first postwar election in Japan that occurred in 1946, the Japanese people, despite having the option to vote for candidates across the political spectrum from Communists to arch-nationalists and the 1946 election having universal suffrage, expressed a “distinct preference for conservative candidates,” i.e. many of the same people who had served in or shared the same ideology as the Imperial Diet during World War II.<sup>119</sup>

In fact, the conservative Liberal and Progressive parties won half of the seats in the Lower House (141 and 92 seats respectively) outright with conservative-minded Independents and members of several conservative minor parties capturing an additional 117 Lower House seats altogether to form a powerful conservative coalition.<sup>120</sup> Left-of-center political parties, such as the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party, won far fewer seats in the Lower House (93 and 5 seats respectively) and were more fractured policy-wise, crippling the strength of the liberal wing of Japanese politics.<sup>121</sup> The electoral tendencies of the Japanese people most likely surround the conservative parties’ desire to retain the position of Emperor and the left-of-center parties’ desire to significantly reform, or even abolish altogether, the position.<sup>122</sup>

Even today Japan is among the most socially conservative countries and one party, the Liberal Democratic Party (the name is misleading for the LDP is a

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<sup>118</sup> Masland, p. 581.

<sup>119</sup> Charles Nelson Spinks, "Postwar Political Parties in Japan," *Pacific Affairs* 19, no. 3 (1946): p. 251, accessed March 25, 2021, doi:10.2307/2752283.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

right-of-center party, yet it is the spiritual successor to the Liberal Party) has predominance in the Japanese political system where it wins most elections despite Japan having universal suffrage.<sup>123</sup> In fact, the longest serving Prime Minister of Japan, Liberal Democratic Party member Shinzo Abe, exemplified the conservative nature of Japanese politics during his second stint as Prime Minister from 2012-2020 by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, which houses the spirits of World War II-era Japanese war criminals.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, Japanese history textbooks still sanitize the war crimes that Japan committed during World War II, with one going as far as to claim that the women that were taken advantage of in Japanese-controlled territories during the war offered their bodies to Japanese soldiers willingly and were not as numerous as other countries claim.<sup>125</sup>

Despite the issues with Japan's democratization, there is no doubt that it should be considered successful; the United States transformed a militaristic, authoritarian society into a vibrant democracy with a strong economy. The success of the coercive democratization of Japan is even more apparent when viewed alongside the United States' coercive democratization of Iraq.

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<sup>123</sup> José Antonio Crespo, "The Liberal Democratic Party in Japan: Conservative Domination," *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale De Science Politique* 16, no. 2 (1995): p. 200, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1601459>.

<sup>124</sup> "Former Japan PM Abe Visits Yasukuni Shrine for War Dead," Reuters, September 19, 2020, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-yasukuni/former-japan-pm-abe-visits-yasukuni-shrine-for-war-dead-idUSKBN26A02U>.

<sup>125</sup> Claudia Schneider, "The Japanese History Textbook Controversy in East Asian Perspective," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617 (2008): p. 116, accessed April 7, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25098016>.

## **Chapter 4: Iraq Before Coercive Democratization**

Pre-2003 Iraq and pre-1945 Japan are different in several significant ways.

The Japanese, for example, have had a far easier time than the Iraqis forging a national identity due to the homogeneity of Japan. Japan's homogeneity derives in part from its status as an island nation, the shared ethnic and religious backgrounds of a vast majority of Japan's population, as well as Japan's history of independence rather than colonization.

In contrast, Iraq is a relatively new political unit that has existed in its current iteration only since 1932. Iraq's colonizers, the British, also drew Iraq's current borders in ways that severely disadvantaged the fledgling nation economically and ignored the wishes of a historically autonomous people residing within Iraq, being the Kurds. Similarly, the British privileged a minority group, Sunni Arabs, at the expense of a Shi'a majority while creating modern-day Iraq, continuing a trend that began under Ottoman rule of the territory.

That being said, there are various examples of Arab Sunni, Arab Shi'a, and Kurds (the majority of which are Sunni) working together during the Ottoman Empire's existence. In fact, political divides within Iraq during Ottoman times were oftentimes based on cleavages other than religion and ethnicity, such as geography. Since pre-1932 Iraq somewhat differs from modern-day Iraq in terms of sectarian divisions, this thesis will give careful attention to the degree to which the policies adopted by the Ottomans, the British, post-independence governments (such as that of Saddam Hussein), the United States occupation forces, as well as

the United Nations electoral commissions intentionally or inadvertently contributed to the strengthening of sectarian divisions within Iraq, and the role these divisions have since played in the democratization of Iraq. This chapter will discuss these divisions prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and conclude with a brief analysis of how sanctions also decimated the country in the decade before the invasion.

### **Basic Background on Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'a, and Kurds in Iraq**

Understanding the ethnic and religious makeup of Iraq is crucial to understanding Iraq's complicated path towards democratization. Iraq is comprised of three major groups: Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'a, and Kurds, the majority of which are Sunnis.

Arab Sunnis comprise about 20% of Iraq's population and have largely been the benefactors of each government that ruled Iraq from the Ottoman Empire to Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party. An amalgamation of a perceived reversal of Sunni progress, a decline in Sunni power, and mistreatment of Sunnis by other groups in Iraq as well as by the United States' military forces following the 2003 invasion of Iraq have perhaps made Sunni Arabs the group most outwardly hostile to the creation of a democratic Iraq.

Shi'a Arabs, a group that comprises 60% of Iraq's total population, have historically been overshadowed in Iraqi governments by their more educated, more influential, more unified, and less numerous Arab counterparts in Iraq, the Sunni Arabs. Conflict between Iraqi Sunni and Shi'a groups can be traced back to

“the competition over the leadership of the Islamic community following the death of the Prophet Mohammed” in 632 AD.<sup>126</sup> The Shi’a supported a hereditary line of succession whereas the Sunni did not. Relations between the two predominant Arab groups in Iraq have been particularly tense since the deportation of thousands of Iraqi Shi’a by the country’s Baathist government in the 1980s.

Lastly, the Kurds are a minority ethnic population concentrated in a geographically distinct part of northern Iraq called Kurdistan. Kurds make up about 20% of the population in Iraq and are the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East. Despite their prevalence in the region, Kurds have no nation of their own, and many are located in Kurdistan in Iraq, an area that operated quasi-autonomously throughout Iraq’s history and nearly fully autonomously throughout Saddam Hussein’s control of Iraq.

### **Religious and Sectarian Divisions in Ottoman Iraq**

The modern-day country of Iraq is a collection of several regions that comprised part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was a Sunni-controlled Islamic nation that ruled between 1299 and 1922. At the height of its power, the Ottoman Empire controlled a vast expanse of territory including parts of northern Africa, the Balkans in eastern Europe, modern-day Turkey, and parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

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<sup>126</sup>Gareth R. V. Stansfield, *Iraq: People, History, Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016, p. 21.

In Ottoman times, Iraq was divided into three *vilayets*, or administrative zones, being: Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra.<sup>127</sup> These vilayets existed for centuries and were not created along sectarian lines, yet each vilayet had significant populations of ethnic or religious groups residing within them that influenced the policies of the vilayets.<sup>128</sup> Each vilayet was administered by a vali, someone who was chosen by the Ottoman Sultan to govern a vilayet.

While the divisions within Iraq while it was part of the Ottoman Empire were regional by nature, not sectarian, large concentrations of ethnic and religious groups tended to be concentrated in distinct geographical regions. Kurds, for example, had significant influence in the vilayet of Mosul due to their large numbers in the region. Likewise, since the Ottoman Empire was a Sunni empire that tended to only allow Sunnis to serve in government positions, Sunnis were concentrated in the urban areas throughout the empire whereas Shi'a tended to be located in the rural regions of Iraq.<sup>129</sup>

The governance of all three of the vilayets was influenced heavily by prominent Arab and Kurdish families that oftentimes had strong ties to the Ottoman Sultan.<sup>130</sup> The vilayet of Baghdad, the spiritual successor to the Islamic

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<sup>127</sup> Çetinsaya Gökhan, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), p. 13, <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/24089/1006042.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>128</sup> Martin Walker, "The Making of Modern Iraq," *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 27, no. 2 (2003): 29-40, accessed January 12, 2021, doi:10.2307/40261182.

<sup>129</sup> Marion Farouk-Sluglett, and Peter Sluglett, "The Historiography of Modern Iraq," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (1991): p. 1413, accessed January 12, 2021, doi:10.2307/2165278.

<sup>130</sup> Gökhan, p. 13.



caliphate that had fallen in 1258, primarily consisted of Sunni Muslims and was quite loyal to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>131</sup>

The vilayet of Mosul, located in northern Iraq, was historically difficult to administer and experienced a high turnover rate of vilas. The difficulty of administering the Mosul vilayet has been attributed to the large Kurdish tribal population in the region which was “well-armed, subordinate to powerful chiefs, prone to brigandage and internecine fighting, and frequently ready to defy the local administration.”<sup>132</sup> The power of the Kurdish tribes forced the vilas of Mosul to pursue a conciliatory approach to governance, resulting in the vilas of Mosul having little real governing ability in the region.<sup>133</sup> In essence, the Kurds experienced quite a large degree of autonomy under Ottoman rule.<sup>134</sup>

Also notable was the administration of the modern-day state of Kuwait by the Basra vilayet, which was majority Shi’a Muslim.<sup>135</sup> Kuwait evaded most of the control of the Basra vilayet (trade in the port town “flourished” mainly because Kuwait successfully evaded the customs duties levied by Basra) relegating the Ottoman Empire’s administration of Kuwait as purely “nominal.”<sup>136</sup>

Although the results of the Ottoman Empire’s administration of its vilayets were varying in terms of their success, the Ottoman Empire did make great strides

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<sup>131</sup> Walker.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Sukumar Muralidharan, "Saddam Hussein, Western Imperialism and Arab Identity," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 38 (1990): p. 2134, accessed January 12, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4396774>.

towards creating a shared Mesopotamian identity that transcended ethnic and religious differences. For example, the Ottoman Empire had attempted to de-tribalize the region in order to more effectively govern it and actively pursued policies, such as the Tanzimat reforms, that significantly decreased the influence of tribal leaders by focusing on building a national, Ottoman identity.<sup>137</sup> For instance, one product of the Tanzimat reforms was the 1869 “law of Ottoman affiliation,” which offered an incredibly flexible definition of Ottoman citizenship and a relatively easy process of obtaining Ottoman citizenship.<sup>138</sup> In fact, the 1869 law ensured that, “the title Ottoman is granted to any affiliated individual without exception, regardless of his religion and sect.”<sup>139</sup>

Despite the concentrations of different religious and ethnic groups in the different vilayets, it would be erroneous to say that the regional and ethnic divisions that existed in Ottoman Iraq were omnipresent within Iraqi society. As Reidar Visser notes in his work, “Other People’s Maps: An American-Inspired Redrawing of the Iraqi Map Along Sectarian Lines Would Do Violence to the Facts of Iraqi History,” from 1534-1914, “no secessionist attempt based on sectarian identity ever emerged,” within Iraq and oftentimes people of the same religion were drawn into conflict against one another due to “regional legacies” rather than ethnic or religious differences.<sup>140</sup> However, it is important to note that

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<sup>137</sup> Stansfield, p. 27.

<sup>138</sup> Wajih Kawtharani, “The Ottoman Tanzimat and the Constitution,” Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 2013, p. 52, accessed January 13, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12682>.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>140</sup> Reidar Visser, “Other People’s Maps: An American-Inspired Redrawing of the Iraqi Map Along Sectarian Lines Would Do Violence to the Facts of Iraqi History,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 31, no. 1 (2007): p. 65, accessed January 12, 2021, doi:10.2307/40262177.

some commonalities between Ottoman Iraq and the deeply sectarian modern-day Iraq do exist in both iterations of the country, namely the extraordinary power of a minority group, the Sunnis, in Iraqi governance, the low influence of the majority Shi'a in Iraqi governance, as well as the existence of a distinct, powerful, geographically-concentrated population of Kurds in Iraq.

The legacy of colonialism following the fall of the Ottoman Empire was also quite impactful on Iraq's development. During World War I, the British, "held no coherent view of their war aims against the Ottoman Empire, simply wanting to defeat it."<sup>141</sup> Throughout the war, Britain sent letters to Palestine, Syria, and Iraq that promised independence and British protection should they help the Allied Powers defeat the Ottoman Empire.<sup>142</sup>

Ultimately, the borders of modern-day Iraq were established by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 named for its negotiators, a British man, Sir Tatton Benvenuto Mark Sykes, and a French man, François Marie Denis Georges-Picot. Prior to the end of World War I, Sykes and Picot were tasked by their respective governments to divvy up the Ottoman Empire into British, French, and Russian spheres of influence.<sup>143</sup> The results of the treaty were the creation of the modern-day states of Israel (previously Palestine), Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

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<sup>141</sup> Walker.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Matthew Wills, "The Map That Created the Modern Middle East," May 12, 2016, accessed January 12, 2021, <https://daily.jstor.org/maps-created-modern-middle-east/>.

The resulting borders reflected the idea that the French and British would each obtain a sphere of influence in the Middle East, and that the two nations would satisfy Russia by granting it influence over the Balkan states bordering the country. The Sykes-Picot Agreement gave Great Britain influence in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), the Persian Gulf, as well as the regions bordering Palestine.<sup>144</sup> France was granted influence over Syria and the eastern littoral of the Mediterranean Sea, and Russia was granted influence over the Baltic regions located between Russia's border and the coastline of the Black Sea.<sup>145</sup> Little regard was given to any factors other than the interests of the victors of World War I in the creation of new states out of the Ottoman Empire.

The Treaty of Sevres also planned to establish an independent Kurdish state. Signed in 1920, the Treaty of Sevres was signed by the Allied Powers and Turkey and, in Article 62, promised "local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas," in Kurdistan, Turkey, and Syria.<sup>146</sup> The state was only supposed to be created if a majority of Kurds voted for it in a referendum. The referendum was not held. In other words, the Treaty of Sevres promised the Kurds their own country. The Treaty of Lausanne, signed in 1923, replaced the Treaty of Sevres and made no mention of an autonomous Kurdish state, much to the ire of the Kurds.<sup>147</sup> In other words, the idea of an independent Kurdish nation was not the

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<sup>144</sup> Rashid I. Khalidi, "The Economic Partition of the Arab Provinces of the Ottoman Empire before the First World War," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 11, no. 2 (1988): p. 252, accessed January 13, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40241095>.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> W. G. Elphinston, "The Kurdish Question," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 22, no. 1 (1946): p. 95, accessed January 13, 2021, doi:10.2307/3017874.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

product of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, although the independence Kurdistan experienced under the reign of Saddam Hussein certainly invigorated Iraqi Kurds' desire for autonomy.

Until 1932 when Iraq gained its independence, Iraq was controlled by the British. During British control of Iraq, the country was divided into several political districts, all of which were controlled by British political officers.<sup>148</sup> The British also engaged in a re-tribalization of Iraqi society that empowered “pliant” Arab sheiks and Kurdish aghas to “be responsible for law and order” across the country in order to make governing the country easier.<sup>149</sup> However, instead of making the political system stronger, the empowerment of these ethnic leaders actually weakened the structure of the political system by creating, “cleavages and enmities” between the newly empowered leaders.<sup>150</sup> In other words, Iraqi ethnic and religious tribal leaders were responsible for much of the governance of Iraq following the demise of the Ottoman Empire, reversing the attempts of the Ottoman Empire to de-tribalize the region.

In fact, King Faysal I, the man who the British selected to rule Iraq following the British occupation of Iraq after World War I, ruminated on the difficulties of fostering a national identity for the Iraqi people due to the reemergence of strong tribal affiliations among Iraqis that transpired under British rule. Twelve years into his rule Faysal wrote:

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<sup>148</sup> Stansfield, Chapter 2.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

There is still -and I say this with a heart full of sorrow- no Iraqi people but unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any patriotic idea, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities, connected by no common tie, prone to anarchy, and perpetually ready to rise against any government whatever.<sup>151</sup>

Notably, Faysal's observations highlight a grievance that the Ottoman Empire had attempted to address with the Tanzimat reforms in the late 1800s. Interestingly enough, Saddam Hussein would also later on attempt to centralize authority in Iraq (albeit by Arab emphasizing ethnicity rather than geographic location/residency), signifying a historical struggle on behalf of the governing bodies of Iraq to create a common Iraqi identity that transcended ethnic and religious cleavages.

Once World War I ended, Britain did not fulfill its promise of swift independence to Iraq resulting in the Iraqi tribes revolting against their British occupiers. Subscribing to the popular 19<sup>th</sup> Century theory of the white man's burden, Britain did not trust the Iraqi people with self-governance, instead preferring to install young, inexperienced British military officers in advisory roles to Arab leaders.<sup>152</sup> The British established their own political districts within Iraq and administered justice, maintained law and order, and tried to mediate tribal disagreements in these districts with little input from the locals.<sup>153</sup> For

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<sup>151</sup> Adeed Dawisha, "'Identity' and Political Survival in Saddam's Iraq," *Middle East Journal* 53, no. 4 (1999): p. 554, accessed January 21, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329390>.

<sup>152</sup> Judith S. Yaphe, "War and Occupation in Iraq: What Went Right? What Could Go Wrong?" *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 3 (2003): p. 385, accessed January 24, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329910>.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

example, the British abolished the elected municipal councils that the Ottomans had installed throughout Iraq.<sup>154</sup>

The degree of authority that the British commanded over the Iraqi people was deemed intolerable by various groups within the country and prompted a series of revolts throughout the early 1920s. Although several groups grew to detest British control (notably the Kurds and Arab nationalists) these groups oftentimes operated independently from one another in their insurrections, making the revolts less effective.<sup>155</sup> The revolts were not successful in expelling the British from Iraq immediately, but they did serve the purpose of encouraging the British to withdraw from the country since the cost of the war (400 men and 40 million pounds) incurred by the British during the revolts proved unpopular among British civilians.<sup>156</sup>

Although the revolts did not result in the expulsion of the British from Iraq, the expulsion of British forces from some cities in the southern part of the country during the revolts offered some Iraqis an opportunity at self-governance.<sup>157</sup> In the temporary absence of their occupiers, Iraqis created systems of governance to maintain law and order as well as provide essential services such as water rationing and health services.<sup>158</sup> For example, in the city of Najaf Iraqis

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p. 386.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p. 391.

<sup>157</sup> Adeed Dawisha, "Democratic Attitudes and Practices in Iraq, 1921-1958," *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 1 (2005): p. 13, accessed January 26, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330094>.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

established their own temporary government which featured democratic principles such as elections and a legislative body.<sup>159</sup>

The revolts also prompted the British to create Iraq's first army, which was comprised primarily of Ottoman-trained Sunni Arabs.<sup>160</sup> The British also installed Faysal I, a prominent Arab nationalist who was a descendant of the family of the Prophet Muhammed, as the first king of Iraq. As a result of Faysal's identity as an Arab nationalist Sunni, Faysal's appointment was rejected by both the Kurds (the Kurd-heavy province of Kirkuk voted against Faysal's ascension to the throne in the British-sponsored legitimization election held to solidify Faysal's appointment) and many Shi'a yet was accepted by the Sunni-dominated army and enough Shi'a to install Faysal as Iraq's first king.<sup>161</sup>

Despite not gaining their independence during Britain's occupation of Iraq, Iraqi Kurds initially benefitted from their new occupiers as the British, "sought to empower local Kurdish leaders and provide them with political and administrative advice."<sup>162</sup> However, Kurdish favor for the British quickly deteriorated as Kurds became increasingly aware of the lack of faith the British held in the ability of the Kurds to govern themselves.<sup>163</sup> British policy towards Kurdistan autonomy became a campaign to discredit the notion that the Kurds had the capacity to rule themselves, resulting in revolts against the British occupiers

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Yaphe, p. 391.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p. 392.

<sup>162</sup> Stansfield, Chapter 2.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.



by the Kurds, making Kurdish nationalism “a perennial problem for successive Iraqi governments in the decades to come.”<sup>164</sup>

It is important to note that although sectarian divisions checker Iraq’s past, political cooperation and underpinnings of democracy are present in Iraq’s history, the most notable of which are the existence and strength of anti-British political parties in the 1920s and Iraq’s Communist Party. Anti-British sentiment served as a unifying factor for ethnically and religiously diverse Iraqis that were disaffected by Britain’s hesitation to grant Iraqis’ wish for a representative government beholden to a legislative council free of British meddling.<sup>165</sup>

For example, in the June-October 1920 revolt against British rule in Iraq, “Sunni and Shi’a Arabs joined forces, praying in each others’ mosques and celebrating together their respective holidays,” while Iraqi Muslims “went to the houses of Christians and Jews” to insist that they join the protests because, “they were Iraqi citizens like everyone else.”<sup>166</sup> In other words, the Iraqi nationalist movement “developed a broad political coalition encompassing members of all Iraq’s ethnic groups, including Sunni and Shi’i Arabs, Kurds, Jews, Christians, Armenians and other minority groups,” suggesting that Iraq might not be as incompatible with democracy as its heterogeneity would suggest.<sup>167</sup> Likewise, Iraq’s Communist Party also garnered significant support from all ethnic and

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Dawisha, “Democratic Attitudes and Practices in Iraq, 1921-1958,” p. 16.

<sup>166</sup> Eric Davis, “Why Iraq Might Be a Better Candidate for Democracy than You Think,” History News Network, 2004, accessed February 28, 2021, <http://hnn.us/articles/1359.html>.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

religious groups in Iraq due to its emphasis on class divisions rather than ethnic or religious divisions.<sup>168</sup>

### **Religions and Ethnic Divisions in Independent Iraq, 1932-2003**

Once the British granted Iraq its independence in 1932, the differences in ethnicity and religion amongst the various tribal groups in the country still pervaded many aspects of society, and the nation grapples with these very same challenges to this day. Iraq's multi-ethnic and multi-religious population is perhaps one of the greatest challenges to democratization that Iraq faces. This is especially true considering that the three largest ethnic and religious groups, Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'i, and Kurds all make up a considerable portion of the nation's population and have very different desires in terms of what they expect from a centralized government.

Following the British occupation of modern-day Iraq after the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, Sunni nationalists were chosen by the British to rule the territory over the "reactionary Shi'i clerics," due to observations that, in Iraq, "Arab nationalism was spreading with an unstoppable momentum."<sup>169</sup> In fact, in the post-World War I period in Iraq, "[t]he empowered political community became almost wholly Sunni Arab, and the government was perceived by outsiders [such as Shi'a and Kurds] to be the political embodiment of that community."<sup>170</sup> This empowerment of Sunni Arabs pervaded nearly all

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Stansfield, Chapter 3.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

aspects of government life, from high-ranking positions in the military to lucrative positions in the nationalized oil ministry.

The Iraqi army, from its origination when Iraq was under British rule, served as a vehicle for Sunni Arab nationalism due to it becoming the “primary means of social mobilization and political progression in the new Iraq,” and the prevalence of Sunni Arabs in the upper echelons of the army.<sup>171</sup> Sunni Arabs held a disproportionate number of officer and other high-ranking positions in the military, and the Iraqi army was also used to brutally quash both Shi’a and Kurdish revolts over time, intensifying the conflict between both of these groups and the predominantly Arab Sunni government at which the Iraqi army operated at the behest of.

The Kurds would continue to suffer under subsequent post-independence governments. For example, the Kurds were abused by the central government of Iraq for demanding a degree of autonomy for the Kurdish people within Iraq in 1961 when guerilla warfare between Iraq’s central government and the Kurdish “peshmerga” ensued after Kurds demanded “linguistic and cultural rights, control over regional security and financial affairs [in Kurdistan] and control over the city of Kirkuk and its oil.”<sup>172</sup> Likewise, as the American journalist George Packer writes, Kurds were forcibly removed from their land in the 1960s. For example, one Kurd Packer spoke to while he was in Iraq said that his family had been forced from their home in Amshaw, a village outside of Kirkuk, by Iraqi military

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

forces in 1963. The Iraqi government then razed Amshaw and redistributed the lands surrounding the city to Arabs.<sup>173</sup> This fate befell many predominantly Kurdish villages throughout the 1960s.

Although the Kurds faced disappointment and discrimination before 1968, the solidification of Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party's rule over Iraq significantly escalated tensions between the Kurds and Iraq's central government, ultimately resulting in Kurdistan operating essentially as its own nation after 1991. The division between the Kurds and the Baathist government was largely due to an ideological movement peddled by Hussein and his Baathists known "Arabization," which saw the Baathists systematically force ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds, from their historic homes, such as Kirkuk, in a mass deportation effort designed to replace non-Arabs with Arabs in areas with large minority populations.<sup>174</sup>

For example, after 1980, the teaching of languages other than Arabic in schools was forbidden.<sup>175</sup> Likewise, Kurds were given the choice of "correcting," or becoming Arab by renouncing their culture and ethnicity in order to remain in the city of Kirkuk.<sup>176</sup> In 1988, chemical weapons were utilized against Kurdish populations in Halabja and "the decimation of Kurdish villages in Iraq's northern mountains reached genocidal proportions."<sup>177</sup> In Halabja alone, about 5,000

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<sup>173</sup> George Packer, "The Next Iraqi War?" *The New Yorker*, September 27, 2004, accessed September 24, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/10/04/the-next-iraqi-war>.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

civilians were killed, and birth defects still pervade the local population there as a result of the chemical weapons utilized against the Kurdish population residing in the town, serving as a living reminder of how the Kurds suffered at the hands of the Baathist government.<sup>178</sup>

A major motive for the ethnic cleansing of the Kurdish people at the behest of the Baathist government was to secure the oil reserves located in Kurdistan. Kurdistan contains within its boundaries about seven percent of Iraq's total oil reserves, making the region strategically important.<sup>179</sup> Essentially, the Baathist government wanted the region's oil under Arab control, and Kurds were "frozen out of government jobs," such as ones at the state-owned Northern Oil Company in Kirkuk, to achieve this end.<sup>180</sup>

Once he was granted control of Iraq, Hussein began cultivating a personality cult around himself and made the idea of Arab nationalism the epicenter of Iraqi politics. When the Baath Party rose to political prominence in 1968, Saddam Hussein initially had to share power with party leaders, yet by 1979 he had eliminated all of his political rivals within the party making Iraqi politics, from 1980 onwards, "inexorably linked to the person of Saddam Hussein."<sup>181</sup>

Hussein became the "final arbiter of power, the ultimate dispenser of justice, and the sole formulator of policy," and aggressively pursued policies that

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<sup>178</sup> Stansfield, Chapter 3.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Dawisha, "'Identity' and Political Survival in Saddam's Iraq," p. 556.

served his own political needs and interests.<sup>182</sup> For example, during the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988, Hussein redefined Iraqi identity in the mold of Arab nationalism as Iranian ayatollahs attempted to turn their co-religionist Iraqi Shi'a neighbors against Saddam's secular government.<sup>183</sup> Attempting to maintain control of the country in the face of increased violence from pro-Iranian Shi'a groups in southern Iraq, Hussein decided to execute Iraq's highest ranking Shi'a cleric, Imam Baqr al-Sadr, and deport approximately 35,000 Iraqi Shi'as.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, Saddam Hussein's Baathist government labeled Shi'a with lucrative business and industrial interests, "'menace[s] to the nation'" and subsequently confiscated many of these Shi'as' properties.<sup>185</sup>

Saddam's strategy to retain his grip on Iraq in the face of the Iranians' appeals to religious divisions was to stress ethnicity. For example, in 1990 Hussein said:

The ruling clique in Iran persists in using the face of religion to foment sedition and division among the ranks of the Arab nation... The invocation of religion is only a mask to cover Persian racism and a buried resentment of the Arabs.<sup>186</sup>

In other words, Hussein fused Iraqi identity with being Arab during the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988.

Interestingly enough, Hussein could have appealed to an already existing Mesopotamian-oriented identity rather than an exclusionary Arab identity in his

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p. 557.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

attempt to combat Iranian aggression.<sup>187</sup> In particular, appealing to the existing Mesopotamian identity (as the Ottomans had) would have provided the benefit of not alienating the Kurds. However, as Adeed Dawisha writes, Hussein was more interested in appealing to Iraqi Shi'as since they constituted around 80% of the country's rank-and-file members of the armed forces, the majority of whom were Arabs.<sup>188</sup>

After Kurdistan broke away from Iraq in 1991 when Iraq was firmly under Saddam Hussein's rule, the Kurds operated with a large degree of autonomy, essentially acting as their own country.<sup>189</sup> Sentiments favoring Kurdish autonomy were bolstered further by the implementation of a no fly-zone over Kurdistan by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France in 1991 which protected the Kurds from Saddam Hussein's aerial attacks.<sup>190</sup>

A major point of contention between Kurdistan and the Baathist government of Iraq revolved around control of the city of Kirkuk. While control over the city's oil reserves was certainly a factor in Saddam's Arabization campaign in Kirkuk, Packer writes that the Baathist regime's campaign was primarily "motivated by ideology," noting that Kirkuk's history and demographics did not fit within the Baathists' vision for the country.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Amatzia Baram, "A Case of Imported Identity: The Modernizing Secular Ruling Elites of Iraq and the Concept of Mesopotamian-Inspired Territorial Nationalism, 1922-1992," *Poetics Today* 15, no. 2 (1994): p. 302, accessed February 3, 2021, doi:10.2307/1773167.

<sup>188</sup> Dawisha, "'Identity' and Political Survival in Saddam's Iraq," p. 558.

<sup>189</sup> Packer.

<sup>190</sup> Phillip Gibbons, "U.S. No-Fly Zones in Iraq," U.S. No-Fly Zones in Iraq: - To What End? - The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, July 1, 2002, accessed November 9, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/u.s.-no-fly-zones-in-iraq-to-what-end>.

<sup>191</sup> Packer.

Kirkuk has historically been an ethnically diverse city, its “layers of successive civilizations hav[ing] nothing to do with Arab glory.”<sup>192</sup> According to a census conducted in 1957, Kirkuk’s ethnic makeup was 35% Kurdish, 45% Turkoman, and only 20% Arab.<sup>193</sup> In fact, the Arabs that Hussein imported into Kirkuk during his Baathification campaign were distinct from the Arabs originally residing in the city “in almost every way,” yet were favored heavily by the Baathist government in Kirkuk.<sup>194</sup>

In essence, the story of Iraq up until the United States’ invasion of the country in 2003 has been heavily influenced by the country’s leadership and heterogeneity in terms of ethnicity and religion. While the country’s heterogeneity was not always as problematic as it is today, the empowerment of a minority group, the Sunni Arabs, by the Ottomans, the British, and Saddam Hussein’s Baathists at the expense of a majority group, the Arab Shi’a, and an ethnic minority group with a history of resisting subjugation, the Kurds, has resulted in deep divisions along ethnic and religious lines within the country resulting in severe repercussions for the democratization of modern-day Iraq.

The violence perpetuated by Saddam Hussein and his Baathists while they were in power also had severe economic repercussions for the country that stagnated the economic growth of Iraq and significantly reduced the quality of life within the country. Prior to the economic sanctions placed on Iraq during the 1970s, Iraq was one of the most developed countries in the Middle East, boasting

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.



high attainments in terms of the Human Development Index categories of life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income per capita/standard of living.

However, the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 by Saddam Hussein and the Baathist government of Iraq led to the implementation of sanctions on Iraqi oil, the resource the country's economy relied most heavily on.<sup>195</sup> Likewise, Hussein's vocalized interest in pursuing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) programs resulted in various embargoes on chemicals and medical utensils. For example, the international community forbade the importation of the chemical chlorine into Iraq since it could be used in making chlorine gas.<sup>196</sup> However, chlorine is also frequently used for non-nefarious things, such as water purification. Likewise, shipments of syringes were withheld from the country for extended periods of time for fear that the Baathist government would use them to create anthrax spores rather than administer medical treatment.<sup>197</sup> As a result of the sanctions imposed on Iraq following its use of chemical weapons during the Gulf War in the early 1990s, the infant mortality rate in Iraq had risen from 3.7 percent before the Gulf War to 12 percent by 1998, exemplifying the havoc the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq wreaked in the country. In fact, several United Nations agencies have estimated that the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq have contributed to hundreds of thousands of deaths in the country.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> John Mueller and Karl Mueller, "Sanctions of Mass Destruction," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 3 (1999): 43-53, accessed February 14, 2021. doi:10.2307/20049279.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

That being said, it could be argued that the reverberations of the sanctions placed on Iraq felt throughout the Iraqi economy and healthcare apparatus would have posed a great challenge to Iraq's democratization even if Iraq were as homogenous as Japan. Essentially, the damage done by the sanctions alone would be a formidable obstacle for the country to overcome on its own. That being said, Japan also grappled with widespread poverty and faced heavy sanctions, particularly on oil and scrap metal, prior to World War II yet was able to overcome these economic obstacles and democratize during the United States' occupation of the country.

Although the sanctions Iraq faced in the 1990s following the Gulf War severely altered the course of Iraq's modernization for the worse, the cleavages amongst the three predominant ethnic and religious groups in Iraq certainly pose a unique challenge to democratization that was not present in the case of Japan, especially considering how subsequent Iraqi governments have, to varying degrees, picked the winners and losers in terms of Iraqi politics.

For example, Sunni villages prospered under the rule of Saddam Hussein, "when local men filled the ranks of the Baathist government," leading to a residual loyalty to Saddam and his movement among the Sunni population.<sup>199</sup> The remaining Sunni nostalgia for Saddam's rule that pervaded Sunni communities in modern-day Iraq largely stems from the Sunnis', "apprehension and anxiety over the fate of a minority (Sunnis) that, by virtue of its wealth, its education, and the

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<sup>199</sup> Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, Sydney, NSW.: ABC Books, 2006, p. 263.

favoritism of overlords, had ruled Iraq for centuries, through colonialism and coups, dictatorship and war.”<sup>200</sup> In other words, following Saddam’s fall, the Sunni population found itself in a very vulnerable, far less powerful position than the minority had grown accustomed to throughout Iraq’s history.

Likewise, since the Ottoman Empire was a Sunni empire, Shi’a rarely held positions of power within the empire despite comprising a majority of the population. This trend continued after the fall of the Ottoman Empire as well since the British further empowered the minority Sunni population with positions in the new Iraqi government. For example, despite Shi’a Arabs comprising a majority of Iraq’s population, the British chose Faysal I, a Sunni Arab nationalist, as the country’s first king.

Religious and political authority amongst Shi’a typically “devolved” to scholars of religion, known as ulema, who acted as, “reference figures for how Shi’i should live their lives,” some of which garnered significant followings.<sup>201</sup> The diffusion of religious authority amongst several influential ulema has politically fragmented Shi’a in Iraq, for each grouping of Shi’a has its own traditions and teachings, contributing to the dilution of Shi’a power in Iraq as the majority religious group grapples with intra-group differences.

Gareth Stansfield, a professor at the University of Exeter who specializes in Middle Eastern studies, also writes about five major historical issues that

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<sup>200</sup> Stansfield, p. 60.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

helped form an, “agitated Shi’i community,” in Iraq.<sup>202</sup> Historically speaking, the division between Sunni and Shi’a transcends religion and pervades the political realm. For example, the Ottoman Empire’s empowerment of Sunni groups during Ottoman rule of Iraq began the transformation of the Sunnis from a religious minority to “the designated ruling class.”<sup>203</sup> That being said, the first issue that fostered Shi’a dissatisfaction is the idea that Shi’a have been historically underrepresented in Iraqi governance. The Shi’a perceive the identity of Iraq to be a Sunni-driven identity “constructed around Arab nationalism and secularism,” whereas the Shi’a would rather the identity of Iraq be driven by spirituality.<sup>204</sup>

The second issue is broadly economic and focuses on land reforms that targeted influential Shi’a. For example, Saddam Hussein’s Baathist government labeled Shi’a with lucrative business and industrial interests, “‘menace[s] to the nation’” and subsequently confiscated many of these Shi’a’s properties.<sup>205</sup> Likewise, the Baathist government deported many of the Shi’a from whom they took land from to Iran in the 1980s.<sup>206</sup>

The third issue is cultural in nature and has to do with the prevalence of secular Arab nationalism over Islam as the driving political force in Iraq. Shi’a are particularly bothered by the, “association of Arab and Iraqi nationalism with the glories of past empires,” which Shi’a believe undermines “the essence of Shi’i

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

Islam with its legitimacy coming from the veneration of the family of Imam Ali.”<sup>207</sup>

The fourth issue concerns the rights of citizens. The major problem in this regard is the Iraqi government equating Shi’ism with “Iranian encroachment into Iraq’s affairs,” due to regional and religious ties between Shi’a communities and Iran, particularly in the southern part of Iraq.<sup>208</sup>

The fifth issue is secularization. Modernization in Iraq lead to a takeover in responsibilities by the state from religious authorities, including the administration of justice, education, and taxation. As a result, the decline of the “vast financial networks” centered around different religious authorities and shrines in the Shi’a community crippled the influential religious class and “weakened their position” in the country considerably.<sup>209</sup>

Despite numerically being a majority in Iraq, the Shi’a, “have traditionally been grossly under-represented within the organs of [the Iraqi] state,” and have, “been viewed with suspicion by successive Arab and Iraqi nationalist governments,” due to the dominance of the Shi’a in neighboring Iran.<sup>210</sup> In fact, Each Iraqi government has viewed Iraqi Shi’a as being influenced by Shi’a in Iran, and has thus discriminated against the Shi’a for fear of Iran playing a major role in Iraqi politics by using the Iraqi Shi’a population to its advantage, presenting further obstacles to the democratization of Iraq.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

The Kurds have been similarly marginalized by subsequent Iraqi governments and have historically operated with a large degree of autonomy under each government Iraq has had since the Ottoman Empire. The geographic concentration of the Kurds in Kurdistan as well as a historic Kurdish desire for an autonomous Kurdish country have been reoccurring issues that each Iraqi government has had to reckon with. Oftentimes, Iraqi governments have utilized violence against the Kurds in order to subjugate them, culminating in the use of chemical weapons against Kurdish populations under Saddam Hussein's rule of the country. Similarly, Hussein's Arabization campaign sought to ethnically cleanse Iraq of non-Arab cultures and the Kurds felt the brunt of the campaign as Kurdish people lost their homes and saw their language and culture purged from Iraqi society. After massive chemical weapons attacks by the government on the Kurds in 1991, the U.S.-and U.K. imposed no-fly zone over the Kurdish areas which continued until 2003 allowed Kurdistan to become for all intents and purposes fully autonomous from Baghdad.

In conclusion, the sanctions that Iraq faced during the 1970s stymied the modernization of Iraq to a degree that crippled the country for decades and significantly disadvantaged Iraq in terms of democratization. Similarly, the policies pursued by subsequent Iraqi governments laid the groundwork for the deep sectarian divisions that pervade modern-day Iraqi society, exacerbating the already difficult endeavor of democratizing a heterogenous society.

## **Chapter 5: The Coercive Democratization of Iraq**

### **Decisions Made by the United States Before Intervening**

In this chapter, I will examine some of the key decisions affecting Iraq in the first three years of the United States' coercive democratization attempt, including: the United States' decision to reject the "Future of Iraq Project," the inadequate number of U.S. troops sent to occupy Iraq, the decision to dissolve the Iraqi army, the de-Baathification of the Iraqi government, as well as the election system implemented in Iraq by the United States.

### **Decision to Disregard the Findings of the Future of Iraq Project**

The United States government did have a plan to address the obvious problems that were likely to arise from a coercive democratization of Iraq. A Department of State document called "The Future of Iraq Project" gave clear indications that the issues of religion and ethnicity would be at the forefront of any democratization effort. "The Future of Iraq Project" (FOI) was a State Department document written in 2002 by working groups consisting of Iraqi diaspora and U.S. experts that sought to formulate a plan for the democratization of Iraq following the ousting of Saddam Hussein. Two questions included in the document are, "Should the new Iraqi constitution make Islam the official state religion or should religion and state be separate?"

The document proposed adopting a federal system which would serve "the rights of nationalities... through local government and via resource sharing with

the regions [of Iraq].”<sup>211</sup> The Democratic Principles Working Group came up with a few different “visions about federalism and the future of Iraq,” being the ideas of implementing either nationally based federalism that emphasized divvying up Iraq into regions that reflect ethnic makeup, and territorially based federalism. which emphasized not ethnicity but a combination of, “geography, population harmony, and tradition.”<sup>212</sup>

Both a two region and multi region variant were discussed. In the version in which Iraq would be divided into only two regions, only the Arabs and Kurds would have received designated regions, whereas in the multi region version Turkmen and Assyrian populations would also have received distinct geographic areas to exercise control over. The authors argued that the two region variant of nationally based federalism would have allowed Arabs and Kurds to “fully realize” their own aspirations in their respective regions, yet it would have been extraordinarily difficult, or even impossible, to place areas or cities, such as Kirkuk, that have “no dominant national group” within either group’s territory without igniting tensions.<sup>213</sup> One key benefit of the multi-region form of federalism was that it would ensure that smaller ethnic minorities such as the Assyrian and Turkmen populations, which constitute less than one percent and less than two percent of the Iraqi population respectively, would be afforded the ability to exercise self-rule, yet it ran the risk of creating low population

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<sup>211</sup> “The Future of Iraq Project,” p. 115

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, pgs. 123-124.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.



geographic areas that might fail to be “economically viable” on their own, (FOI, pg. 124).<sup>214</sup>

Finally, there was the territorially based federalism plan. The benefit of such a plan was that it would not divide the country along ethnic lines and would therefore “encourage tolerance and integration,” potentially leading future generations to be “less driven by national and religious pride.”<sup>215</sup> However, this plan was weak in the sense that the territorial regions would be filled with *too* diverse a population that would have the potential of leaving each group equally unsatisfied as the regional government failed to address the cultural needs of each group.<sup>216</sup> A five region federal structure was ultimately the plan that the Democratic Principles Working Group decided upon as the best course of action for Iraq, noting that under this plan, ethnicities would not be the primary reason for geographic divisions since many districts would have a mixed population and that each region would be large enough to be economically viable, yet small enough so that the people could hold the regional governments accountable.<sup>217</sup>

Ultimately, the FOI was discarded by the United States. Ambassador Barbara Bodine, the Coordinator for the Central Region of Iraq under the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), says that internal Washington politics resulted in the project being completely scrapped.<sup>218</sup> Bodine says that then-Vice President Dick Cheney and then-Secretary of State Donald

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid, p. 124.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Barbara Bodine Interview, conducted on March 19, 2021 over Zoom.

Rumsfeld were uninterested in the long-term democratization option offered by the Future of Iraq Project and preferred a short-term operation that would create a pro-U.S. government led by the expatriate Iraqi politician Ahmed Chalibi.<sup>219</sup> In fact, Bodine says that anybody who was associated with the Future of Iraq Project was forbidden from taking part in the occupation of Iraq.<sup>220</sup>

### **Size of the U.S. Occupation Force**

A second key decision prior to the invasion that affected its success dramatically was the level of U.S. troops with which to invade the country, which most military officials outside the political appointees in the Pentagon, and many scholars, argued was severely inadequate.

The initial U.S. force in Iraq was 150,000 soldiers.<sup>221</sup> Larry Diamond, an American scholar of democracy who served in the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004 at the invitation of then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, cites a study by the RAND Corporation in his book on the U.S.' occupation of Iraq, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, that argued that, "[t]here appears to be an inverse correlation between the size of the stabilization force and the level of risk [in a nation-building situation]. The higher the proportion of stabilizing troops, the lower the number of casualties suffered and inflicted."<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p. 285.

Diamond notes that using the RAND Corporation's 1 to 50 international soldiers to inhabitants figure from its study of the successful occupations of Bosnia and Kosovo would have required the U.S. to have deployed a force of "nearly half a million troops."<sup>223</sup> As one of Diamond's anonymous sources told him:

[t]he inadequacy of force and of resources meant that we could not secure the roads, we could not protect the courageous Iraqis who were coming to work with us, and ultimately we could not protect our own people."<sup>224</sup> The United States also lacked sufficient troops to secure Iraq's border and hunt down the remnants of Saddam Hussein's force, opening the country up to insurgency and violence.<sup>225</sup>

Diamond's report of insufficient troop levels is not isolated. In fact, Ambassador Barbara Bodine, both in an interview I conducted and in the documentary on the United States coercive democratization attempt in Iraq, "No End In Sight," lamented the lack of troops devoted by the United States to the occupation effort, citing insufficient troop levels as a major reason that the coercive democratization of Iraq failed since, as a result of L. Paul Bremer's decision to disband the Iraqi military, there was no existing policing apparatus that could crack down on looters and keep the Iraqi streets safe.<sup>226</sup> In the absence of the Iraqi army and sufficient numbers of American military personnel, Iraq was left essentially defenseless from crime.

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid, p. 285.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Charles Ferguson, "No End in Sight: Iraq's Descent into Chaos, the Inside Story from the Ultimate Insiders, United States: Magnolia Pictures, 2007.

Why were so few troops used? Diamond suggests that deploying a force equal to the size of the RAND Corporation's figure would have "necessitated an immediate mobilization of the military reserves and National Guard... [which] might have alarmed the [American] public into questioning the costs and feasibility of the entire occupation."<sup>227</sup> In other words, deploying a larger occupation force would have been a politically unpopular move for American leaders to take, granting credence to De Mesquita and Downs' theory concerning the intentions of a democratizing leader and the outcome of occupations.

Another reason why the United States' occupation force was relatively small was the plan that the United States had for the governance of Iraqi after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. The Bush Administration relied heavily on a man named Ahkmed Chalibi, the president of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a generally pro-invasion, anti-Saddam Hussein group consisting almost entirely of Iraqi exiles that had the ability to meet in the autonomous zone of Kurdistan or outside of Iraq. This reliance of Chalibi's predictions occurred despite the United States' Intelligence Committee finding the data of the INC very unreliable in its planning for the occupation of Iraq. The Bush Administration was enticed by Chalibi's claim that post-war Iraq would be pro-American. Thus, the Bush Administration formulated a plan to occupy Iraq for a mere three-four months and install a government made up of Iraqi exiles led by Chalibi and planned for a

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<sup>227</sup> Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p. 287.

“drastic reduction of troops” in Iraq following the installation of said government.”<sup>228</sup> Likewise, ORHA was only provided with 120 staff.<sup>229</sup>

In a similar vein, the Bush Administration did not create ORHA until 60 days before the invasion. ORHA was severely underfunded, with its offices lacking basic equipment, such as computers, and adequate staff and support personnel. These issues, alongside a lack of interpreters and protective equipment, persisted once the ORHA members and American forces arrived in Iraq.<sup>230</sup>

Civilians who did arrive were often unqualified for the tasks to which they were assigned. Diamond notes that a twenty-four-year-old Yale graduate was tasked with reorganizing the Baghdad stock exchange and a Harvard graduate in his twenties was one of the people who helped negotiate the country’s new constitution.<sup>231</sup>

### **Decision to Disband the Iraqi Army**

In the first few months of the occupation, ORHA, under the leadership of Jay M. Garner, a retired general who had led Operation Provide Comfort (an operation aiming to assist the Kurds during the Gulf War in 1991), severely miscalculated how long democratizing Iraq would take. In fact, Garner was under the impression that he could assemble an interim Iraqi authority in just three months. After Garner’s tenure as the head of ORHA, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Barbara Bodine interview.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p. 289.

took charge of the Iraqi occupation effort as the head of the newly formed Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and proceeded to make a series of decisions that had disastrous impacts on the coercive democratization of Iraq.

While the U.S. invaded Iraq with what most observers argue was a grossly inadequate number of troops, the resulting difficulty was greatly compounded by the CPA's decision in the first months after Saddam's removal to disband the Iraqi army. Critics of this decision point to the proliferation of roving militia groups, many of which were constituted from the newly unemployed members of the Iraqi Army as well as the inability of the American forces to effectively police post-invasion Iraq due to a severe lack in numbers and equipment.

The decision to dissolve the Iraqi army was made by L. Paul Bremer and was issued on May 15, 2003, and cost 450,000 Iraqi soldiers their jobs.<sup>233</sup> L. Paul Bremer defended his decision by stating that by the time Baghdad had fallen on April 9, of 2003, the "Iraqi Army had simply dissolved," citing the words of General John Abizaid, who served as Deputy Commander of U.S. Central Forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Abizaid had said, in a video briefing American officials about the situation in Iraq, that, "there [were] no organized Iraqi military units left," after Hussein's fall leaving the United States with the options of either trying to recall the old army or to build a new one out of "vetted members of the old army and new recruits."<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>234</sup> L. Paul Bremer, "How I Didn't Dismantle Iraq's Army," *The New York Times*. September 6, 2007, accessed September 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/06/opinion/06bremer.html>.

Bremer argues that he had no choice but to dissolve the army due to what he called “the practical impossibility” of recalling the original Iraqi Army because looting had left the country’s army bases unusable.<sup>235</sup> Likewise, Bremer argued that the ethnic makeup of the original army’s draftees and commanders would have made retaining the Iraqi army unrealistic, suggesting that the Shi’a draftees would not have responded to a recall order from their primarily Sunni commanding officers.<sup>236</sup> Finally, Bremer argues that the political and symbolic ramifications of reinstating an army that would be, according to Bremer, a reminder of Hussein’s “Baathist-led Sunni ascendancy,” to the Iraqi public made dissolving the Iraqi army necessary for the democratization of Iraq to be successful.<sup>237</sup> Bremer also mentions that the plan to create a new army open to new recruits as well as old army members was approved and edited by not only one individual, but by many high-ranking officials in the U.S. and British governments. In fact, according to Bremer, aside from a few “minor edits” not a single “military or civilian official raised objections to the proposal to create a new Iraqi army or to formally dissolve Saddam Hussein’s security apparatus.”<sup>238</sup> Bremer argues that he did not make this momentous decision alone, and that the decision “was carefully considered by top civilian and military members of the American government,” and claims that dissolving the army was, “the right decision.”<sup>239</sup> Many serving military officers and journalists’ accounts of Bremer’s

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

decision making and reasoning directly contradict Bremer. Diamond notes that U.S. Army officers predicted that it would create a “security vacuum, humiliate a strategic, well-armed segment of society, and thereby stimulate a violent backlash.”<sup>243</sup>

Similarly, *New York Times* reporter Michael R. Gordon also writes that it was indeed Bremer who had made the call to dissolve the Iraqi Army “revers[ing] an earlier plan,” that “would have relied on the Iraqi military to help secure and rebuild the country and had been approved at a White House meeting that Mr. [George W.] Bush convened just 10 weeks earlier.”<sup>249</sup> Gordon alleges that despite President Bush ultimately endorsing Bremer’s plan, Bremer circumvented the secretary of state, Colin Powell, and the senior American commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, during the formulation of the plan, “prompt[ing] bitter infighting within the government and the military, with recriminations continuing to this day [March 2008].”<sup>250</sup> The original plan, according to Gordon, was to use the existing Iraqi military apparatuses to “help protect the country” and serve as “a national reconstruction force.”<sup>251</sup> Only the Republican Guard units, the units most deeply loyal to Hussein, were supposed to be “disarmed, detained and dismantled” under the original plan.<sup>252</sup> Part of the logic in retaining a large number of the soldiers in the Iraqi Army was to prevent putting 250,000-300,000

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<sup>243</sup> Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p. 39.

<sup>249</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “Fateful Choice on Iraq Army Bypassed Debate,” *The New York Times*. 17, 2008, accessed September 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/17/world/middleeast/17bremer.html>.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.



soldiers out of work and on the streets where they might turn to crime to provide for themselves and their families.<sup>253</sup>

A hiccup in this plan was the desertion of many Iraqi soldiers after the ousting of Saddam Hussein, and therein lay the conflict between the highest-ranking American civilian official in Iraq, Bremer, and his military counterpart, McKiernan. Bremer saw the desertion of Iraqi soldiers as proof that the old military had disbanded, whereas McKiernan believed that the Iraqi army could be reestablished if soldiers and some generals and senior officers were officially recalled.<sup>254</sup> McKiernan's plan was to put the Iraqis who responded to the recall on a roster and "sort out the bad guys as [they] went."<sup>255</sup> General Abizaid echoed McKiernan's sentiments, adding that, "Arab armies were traditionally large to keep angry young men off the street and under the supervision of the government."<sup>256</sup> Given the loss of income and Abizaid's statements, it is easy to see how young, unemployed men who had formerly been receiving compensation and military training in the old Iraqi army, might have turned to looting and insurgency to compensate for their loss of income and pride.

The Future of Iraq project had argued against dissolving the Iraqi army, suggesting instead that its members be trained in human rights and international law.<sup>257</sup> Larry Diamond considers the dissolution of the Iraqi army one of

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> "Future of Iraq Project," pgs. 113-114.

Bremer's "fateful decisions that collectively put the United States down a treacherous path."<sup>258</sup>

The large numbers of Sunnis in the army meant that perhaps the most important long-term repercussion of dissolving the army was turning this segment of the population against the U.S. and the Iraqi government, leading directly to the rise of the insurgency and support for al-Qaeda in Iraq.

### **Decision Not to Stop the Looting**

Upon the arrival of United States forces in Iraq and the subsequent ousting of Hussein, chaos ensued. Looting was rampant, the cost of which was around 12 billion dollars, or roughly equivalent to the revenue of Iraq during the 2003-2004 fiscal year and was not limited to small items.<sup>261</sup> Looters would engage in activities such as destroying concrete walls with heavy-duty excavation equipment in order to take the rebar from within them, emphasizing how problematic the looting issue was.<sup>262</sup> Insurgent groups also proliferated as a lack of policing of looting and violence persisted and as mass arrests occurred which oftentimes removed a breadwinner from a family on the basis of his being a military-aged man.<sup>263</sup>

U.S. forces were not ordered to intervene to prevent the looting, another decision which many see as a key mistake in the early months of the war by high-

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<sup>258</sup> Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, Chapter 2.

<sup>261</sup> "No End in Sight."

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

ranking officials such as Ambassador Barbara Bodine, the CPA's Coordinator for the Central Region of Iraq.<sup>264</sup> Soldiers were directly ordered not to interfere with the looting, even though the Fourth Geneva Convention made intervening in stopping the looting permissible under international law. In Ambassador Barbara Bodine's words, the lack of response to the looting showed that "liberation really didn't have anything to do with the average Iraqi," leading the Iraqi people to turn against the Americans.<sup>266</sup> Bodine also mentions that ORHA had identified 20 sites that needed to be protected, including important historical, cultural, religious, and artistic sites, as well as the oil ministry. Out of those sites, only the oil ministry was protected, leading to a prevailing thought amongst the Iraqi people that America was only interested in Iraq for its oil.<sup>267</sup> Ambassador Peter Galbraith noted that "unchecked looting effectively gutted every important institution in the city- with the notable exception of the oil ministry."<sup>268</sup> The occupation effort projected the image that it was prioritizing protecting Iraq's oil over the very people the forces were there to help, which bolstered the idea that the United States was uninterested in the long-term health of Iraq's new democracy.

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<sup>264</sup> Barbara Bodine interview.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, p. 282.

## **Decision to Pursue Extensive De-Baathification**

The de-Baathification order, also issued at the behest of L. Paul Bremer on May 15, 2003, severely weakened the United States' occupation effort in Iraq. Bremer's order saw as many as 50,000 Baath party members expelled from government employment, but in reality, it is likely many more individuals were impacted by this decision.<sup>269</sup>

The purge of the Baath Party might have been one of the most telling reasons for the failure of the U.S. occupation of Iraq because it removed not only most of the Iraqi army, but tens of thousands of highly educated professionals from serving society as well. As Diamond quotes an anonymous source saying, "the Baath Party was the state, and when you dissolve the party you dissolve the state. You deprive yourself [the occupier] of the whole state. You deprive kids of teachers, people of doctors. You deprive the country of engineers who could fix the infrastructure."<sup>271</sup>

By removing members of the Baath Party from influential roles completely, the existing apparatus of the state essentially ceased to exist, leaving the United States with the task of guiding a country through democratization with only itself to shoulder the burden. Both the dissolution of the army and the removal of Baathists from these positions helped to cement the idea that the United States was an occupier, not a liberator. Had the United States followed the Freedom of Iraq Project's guidance, instead of purging the entire Baath Party

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, p. 295.

from political life, only high and mid-level perpetrators of war crimes would have been held accountable. Following this guidance could have potentially remedied some of the resulting downsides of getting rid of the vast majority of educated, trained state officials, such as shortages of teachers and engineers, state actors who would have been crucial to rebuilding and democratizing Iraq.

### **Signs of Increasing Sectarian Violence**

As the blunders on behalf of the U.S. occupation force began to accumulate causing looting to spread and an anti-American insurgency to take hold, signs of increasing violence around sectarian divisions began to emerge.

### **Kurdish Resentment Over Past Injustices**

One of the most defining features of Saddam Hussein's regime was his genocide against Iraq's Kurdish population. Although previous Iraqi governments had displaced Kurdish populations in Iraq prior to Hussein and his Baathist government, Hussein significantly escalated violence against the Kurds due to a policy he aggressively pursued known as "Arabization." Arabization campaigns were utilized by Hussein to consolidate oil resources in Kurdistan, the northern region of Iraq that has historically been the homeland of Iraqi Kurds.<sup>272</sup>

Hussein's Arabization campaigns included a genocide against the Kurds. The Anfal Campaign, carried out by Hussein's cousin "Chemical" Ali Hussein al-Majid in 1988, saw as many as 4,000 Kurdish villages and towns destroyed and

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<sup>272</sup> "Background: Forced Displacement and Arabization of Northern Iraq," accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/iraq0804/4.htm>.

resulted in the disappearance of some 100,000 Kurds, many of whom had chemical weapons utilized against them.<sup>273</sup>

Later on, in 1991, Hussein and his Baathist government displaced 120,000 Kurds from Kirkuk, an oil-rich city in northern Iraq that had historically had a sizeable Kurdish population, replacing them with Arabs in an attempt to create an Arab majority in the city.<sup>274</sup>

The resentment Iraq's Kurdish population fostered concerning the Anfal Campaign and the Arabization of Kirkuk would prove to be a major obstacle for U.S. occupation forces to surmount. For example, once Baathist officials had been driven out of Kirkut in the wake of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, Kurds began chasing Arabs out of their former homes and squatting in houses left behind by fleeing Baathists. American soldiers, like Jordan Becker in the article by Packer, approached these squatters and essentially told them that they needed to vacate in order to create stability in the nation, rather than seek immediate rectifications for past wrongs.<sup>275</sup> According to Packer, the Kurds were initially accepting of the Americans' logic due to their image as liberators from an oppressive regime.<sup>276</sup>

However, this sentiment quickly faded as acceptable state apparatuses for assessing claims by Kurds over lost land and possessions failed to appear in a

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Packer.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

timely fashion.<sup>277</sup> The tables quickly turned as Kurdish militant groups displaced Arabs who were given homes by the Baathists that were originally in Kurdish hands, making one disgruntled Arab note that the Kurds were displacing more Arabs than necessary in their reclamations. Packer notes that the Arab man remarked that, “the number of Kurdish families who had taken over Amshaw was just half the number of Arabs who had fled—there were enough houses in Amshaw for twenty-five Arab families to return and live together with the Kurds,” making it clear that the Kurds are not completely blameless in the ensuing struggle for peace in Iraq.<sup>278</sup>

### **Sunni Grievances & the Rise of the Insurgency**

The Kurds were not the only group of Iraqis that harbored resentment following the 2003 invasion. The Iraqi army, from its origination when Iraq was under British rule, served as a vehicle for Sunni Arab nationalism due to it becoming the “primary means of social mobilization and political progression in the new Iraq,” and the prevalence of Sunni Arabs in the army.<sup>279</sup> Most importantly, Sunni Arabs held a disproportionate number of officer and other high-ranking positions in the military. The Iraqi army was also used to brutally quash both Shi’a and Kurdish revolts over time, intensifying the conflict between both of these groups and the predominantly Arab Sunni government which the Iraqi Army operated at the behest of.

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Stanfield, p. 85.

Resistance from the Sunni population in Iraq against American forces increased as the U.S. military began to actively hunt for Sunni insurgents, such as was the case in “Operation Peninsula Strike,” a 2003 military venture into the Sunni Triangle (an area consisting of the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that ranged from the borders of Iran and Syria to central Iraq) to root out insurgents.

As Anthony Shadid writes in his book, *Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War*, the raids on Sunni villages conducted during Operation Peninsula Strike, “ignited myriad grievances in [Sunni] villages like Thuluyah, molding a tableau of confusion, fear, and vengeance,” within the Sunni population in Iraq as more and more Sunnis became collateral damage.<sup>280</sup> According to Shadid, many of the Sunni villages American forces raided had prospered under the rule of Saddam Hussein, “when local men filled the ranks of the Baathist government,” leading to a residual loyalty to Saddam and his movement among the Sunni population. This remaining Sunni nostalgia for Saddam’s rule largely stemmed from the Sunnis’, “apprehension and anxiety over the fate of a minority (Sunnis) that, by virtue of its wealth, its education, and the favoritism of overlords, had ruled Iraq for centuries, through colonialism and coups, dictatorship and war.”<sup>281</sup> In other words, following Saddam’s fall, the Sunni population found itself in a very vulnerable, far less powerful position than the minority had grown accustomed to.

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<sup>280</sup> Shadid, p. 262.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, p. 263.



American raids on Sunni villages following increases in ambushes and hit-and-run attacks on American forces in the Sunni Triangle, “a region that the U.S. military, early on, had identified as a bastion of support for the fallen government,” heightened tensions between the American occupation forces and Sunni citizens as raids began to result in the deaths and injuring of innocent people, including children. In Thuluyah, for example, one 15-year-old boy was shot in the arm during the raid, a mentally challenged 19-year-old was beaten by American forces for panicking when soldiers taped his mouth shut, and another 15-year-old boy was shot and killed outright.<sup>282</sup>

Likewise, American soldiers rounded up Sunni villagers in Thululyah indiscriminately and brought them to detention centers for questioning. According to Shadid, out of the approximately four hundred residents of the town who were arrested, “all but fifty” were released in the days following the raid.<sup>283</sup> The mass roundups of Sunni villagers began to instill in Sunni villagers a sense that the United States was administering collective punishment on Sunnis for simply sharing a religion with Saddam, a sentiment that would serve as a radicalizing factor for many Sunnis who had initially, “joined the [Baath] party more for its patronage than its politics.”<sup>284</sup>

The Iraqi city of Fallujah, a city that has a very large Sunni population, was also decimated by American forces in March 2004 when the city was occupied by American soldiers after four American Blackwater (a private military

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid, p. 265.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, p. 266.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid, p. 268.

contractor the United States hired to assist in the Iraqi occupation) mercenary soldiers were killed in the city by insurgents. Over 600 Iraqis, many of whom were women and children, perished during the ten days of fighting that ensued between U.S. forces in the city and insurgents.<sup>285</sup> During the standoff, the United States called in multiple air strikes, which further alienated the Sunni population as they saw their city get destroyed and their friends and families become collateral damage.<sup>286</sup> The violence in Fallujah greatly contributed to Sunni hesitancy to participate in the first Iraqi elections.

### **Elections and Sectarianism in Post-Invasion Iraq**

The elections to create the Iraqi parliament as well as to approve the country's constitution, held in January and December respectively, would prove to be highly divisive and sectarianized.

After the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003, one of the major goals of the Coalition Provisional Authority was to determine an electoral system that would provide Iraq with a Transitional National Assembly.<sup>287</sup> The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) considered multiple forms of electoral systems, including a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, multiple proportional representation (PR) systems, an alternative vote (AV) system, and a single nontransferable vote (SNTV) system for Iraq.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Alice Hills, "Fear and Loathing in Falluja," *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 4 (2006): p. 623, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608734>.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Larry Diamond and Adeed Dawisha, "Electoral Systems Today: Iraq's Year of Voting Dangerously," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 2 (2006): p. 90.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

Some systems were removed from contention rather quickly due to the existing realities of post-invasion Iraq. For example, the FPTP system was dismissed due to the heterogeneity of Iraq. Although a FPTP system would have curbed the prevalence of autocratic and radical groups in the Iraqi political sphere, a winner-take-all electoral system would also have severely disadvantaged minority groups, such as the Sunnis. Similarly, the idea of implementing an AV system, which requires voters to rank candidates on a ballot, was thrown out quickly. Although an AV system is desirable since it forces candidates to strive to be not only a voter's first choice, but also a voter's second and third choice, therefore encouraging the adoption of politically moderate stances by candidates, the CPA recognized that Iraq simply did not have the resources to do the laborious tasks of tallying, districting, and recounting that an AV system demands of a governing body.<sup>289</sup> Similarly, the CPA wanted to keep voting simple for the Iraqi people, many of whom had not participated in a democratic election for several decades.<sup>290</sup>

Ultimately, a proportional representation system was deemed most appropriate for Iraq, mainly due to the system's promotion of power sharing. The system was also the fairest, since in a proportional representation system the government would (in theory) reflect the makeup of the population.<sup>291</sup> That being said, the proportional representation system put an historically powerful minority group, the Sunni Arabs, at a significant disadvantage vis a vis the Kurds (whom

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid, p. 91.

Sunni Arab governments had oppressed and whom had been essentially acting autonomously for over a decade) and the Shi'a (whom had been perennially underrepresented in Iraqi governments as well as subjected to discriminatory policies such as deportation by Sunni Arab governments).<sup>292</sup> Kurdish and Shi'a leaders also strongly encouraged their people to vote under this new system.<sup>293</sup>

In other words, while the Kurds and Shi'a were enthusiastic about utilizing a proportional representation system in Iraqi elections since it significantly expanded their clout in the country's governance, it is important to note that Sunni Arabs had much to lose from this particular electoral system due to Sunni Arab domination in preceding Iraqi governments. This was especially so given the blatantly sectarian rule of Saddam Hussein. In fact, the way in which the CPA set up Iraq's PR system (utilizing PR in a single nationwide district rather than in multiple districts and not including a minimum floor of representation for geographic areas) resulted in the January 2005 elections being, "almost purely a national-identity referendum," and the majority of Sunni political parties boycotting the elections.<sup>295</sup>

Sunnis were also berated by radical Sunni and Baathist insurgent groups, such as al-Qaeda, throughout Iraq's first election. In fact, al-Qaeda threatened to retaliate against Sunnis who participated in the election, significantly decreasing

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid, p. 93.

voter turnout in Sunni-dense governorates.<sup>296</sup> For example, in the Sunni-majority governorates of Anbar, Salahaddin, Ninewa, and Diyala, voter turnout was respectively only 2.42, 29.25, 16.96, and 33.09 percent of the governorates' total eligible voting populations in Iraq's first election.<sup>297</sup> Non-coincidentally, these governorates also happened to be where the majority of violence occurred in Iraq.<sup>298</sup> For example, 47 percent of the 8,799 attacks that happened in Iraq from April 2004-December 2005 occurred in Sunni-majority governorates.<sup>299</sup> In contrast, 5 percent of the attacks occurred in Shi'a-majority governorates and only .06 percent of the attacks occurred in Kurd-majority governorates in Iraq within the same time period.<sup>300</sup> Shaheen Mozaffar's tables from his work, "Elections, Violence and Democracy in Iraq," help to show these discrepancies.<sup>301</sup> Fascinatingly, Shi'a-majority governorates generally experienced lower voter turnout rates than Kurdish-majority governorates, suggesting that there is a correlation between a population's experience with violence and voter turnout rates.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Larry Diamond, "How a Vote Could Derail Democracy," *The New York Times*, January 9, 2005, accessed February 28, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/09/opinion/how-a-vote-could-derail-democracy.html>.

<sup>297</sup> Shaheen Mozaffar, "Elections, Violence and Democracy in Iraq," *Bridgewater Review* 25, no. 1 (2006), p. 8.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

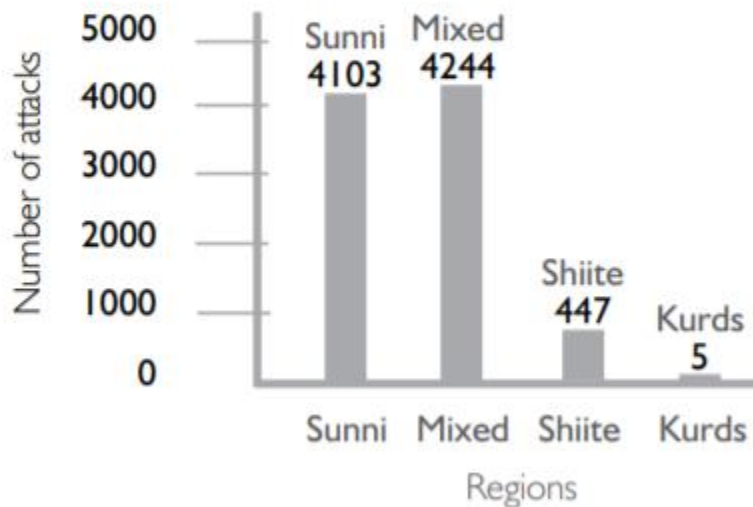
<sup>301</sup> Ibid, pgs. 6 and 8.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid, p. 8

**Table I**  
**Voter turnout percentages in three Iraqi elections in 2005**

<b>Governorates</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>December</b>
Anbar	2.42	38.35	86.37
Babil	73.06	72.74	79.43
Baghdad	51.49	54.97	70.06
Basrah	72.36	63.01	74.20
Diyala	33.09	67.41	74.87
Dohuk	92.46	84.81	92.00
Erbil	83.79	95.46	95.26
Karbala	74.75	60.19	70.44
Misan	61.25	57.59	73.27
Muthanna	64.79	58.80	66.07
Najaf	75.25	56.51	72.76
Ninewa	16.96	53.50	70.16
Qadissiya	70.73	56.71	64.67
Salahaddin	29.25	90.36	98.43
Suleimaniya	82.11	75.25	84.19
Taamim	70.01	78.47	86.10
Theqar	68.84	56.62	71.85
Wasit	71.08	53.72	67.99
<b>IRAQ</b>	<b>58.32</b>	<b>63.28</b>	<b>76.36</b>

**Figure I**  
**Patterns of Political Violence in Iraq:**  
**April 2004–December 2005**



Source: Calculated by author from various sources

The violence experienced by Sunni politicians who attempted to participate in Iraq's first election is displayed in the documentary *My Country, My Country*, which follows a Sunni physician, Riyadh al-Adhath, who decided to run for office in Iraq's first election, despite other Sunnis feeling as though the security and validity of the elections would be dubious due to the United States' policies towards Sunnis, such as mass detention and raids on mosques, as well as the United States' siege of Fallujah, a city home to many Sunni Islamic leaders.<sup>303</sup> Al-Adhath encouraged Sunnis to participate despite the pervasive notion that the election would not be fair towards Sunnis by arguing that boycotting the elections would leave the Sunnis with no voice in Iraq's new government.<sup>304</sup> For his attempts to drive Sunnis to the polls to avoid the (ultimately real) scenario of low Sunni participation leading to underrepresentation of Sunnis in Iraq's new government, al-Adhath and his family received threats of violence.<sup>305</sup>

In the film, even Kurds were doubtful about the idea that an election could be conducted legitimately given the tension and violence experienced across large swaths of the country, particularly in areas with large Sunni populations such as Baghdad. As a Kurdish security sub-contractor put it in the film, "[w]e like America, we are pro-American, especially my tribe, my family, we are pro-Americans, pro-coalition, but when something is wrong [it] is wrong. [If] you are my friend, [when] you make mistakes I have to tell you that this is wrong," citing

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<sup>303</sup> *My Country, My Country*, 2006.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

the lack of power, water, and security in Baghdad as indicators that the first election would be viewed as little more than a “show.”<sup>306</sup>

Overall, the first Iraqi election had a 58 percent voter turnout rate and people largely voted in accordance with their sectarian and ethnic identities.<sup>307</sup> For example, about 95 percent of Kurds voted for the Kurdistan Alliance (a Kurdish nationalist party) and 75 percent of Shi’as voted for the United Iraqi Alliance (or UIA, a party made up of mostly Shi’a and religious authorities).<sup>308</sup> Importantly, Sunnis only controlled about five percent of seats in the newly constituted Iraqi parliament despite making up about 20 percent of Iraq’s population because 75 percent of Sunnis boycotted the election (either of their own free will or because of intimidation by Sunni and Baathist insurgent groups) meaning that their voice was significantly diluted in the creation of Iraq’s new government and the drafting of Iraq’s constitution.<sup>309</sup> As a result, Sunni Arabs attempted to delegitimize the Iraqi elections by painting them as a “U.S. imperialist endeavor while giving a silent nod to the threats and intimidation employed by the Sunni insurgents.”<sup>310</sup>

The fact that the Sunnis largely boycotted the January 2005 elections left them in a difficult position. The Sunni boycott resulted in the Sunnis only winning seventeen out of the 275 seats in the National Assembly despite Sunnis

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Diamond and Dawisha, p. 93.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>309</sup> Diamond, “How a Vote Could Derail Democracy.”

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.



comprising about 20 percent of Iraq's population.<sup>311</sup> Recognizing that they would not be able to influence the creation of the constitution, the elected Sunnis attempted to appeal to Article 61(c) of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) that had been put in place by the 25-member Iraqi Governing Council, the members of which were selected by the United States and were largely unknown to the Iraq public.<sup>312</sup> Article 61(c) gives any three of Iraq's 18 governorates the power to veto any constitutional draft by a two-thirds majority and was originally included in the TAL at the request of Kurdish parties to ensure that the Kurds were not disadvantaged by the Iraqi constitution due to Iraq being predominantly Arab.<sup>313</sup> The Sunnis utilized this provision to ensure representation in the drafting process, and by December 2005, the groups had come up with a draft that they were able to put to the public for a vote.

The Sunnis' realization that trying to delegitimize the elections was not going to benefit them and their successful threats to use Article 61(c) to derail the drafting of the constitution resulted in the Sunnis gaining more representation in the existing government and the ability to join the constitution-drafting committee. The United States helped broker a deal between the Sunnis, Shi'a, and Kurds to include the Sunnis due to a recognition that doing so was necessary to combat Sunni insurgency and draft the constitution.<sup>314</sup> As the group with the most

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<sup>311</sup> Jonathan Morrow, "Iraq's Constitutional Process II: An Opportunity Lost," United States Institute of Peace, December 1, 2005, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2005/12/iraqs-constitutional-process-ii-opportunity-lost>.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, Chapter Six.

to lose per se, the Sunnis refused to validate the constitution-drafting committee's first draft of the constitution for fear that it was going to create a federal structure with a northern Kurdish region and a Shi'a southern region (both of which would have control over most of Iraq's oil), with a resource-bereft Sunni central region.<sup>315</sup>

To overcome Sunni opposition, the Kurds and Shi'a consented to Sunni demands that the issues they had identified (primarily being Sunni fears over a federal structure that put them at an economic disadvantage) would be addressed in amendments to the constitution that would be made following the adoption of the constitution. Despite Sunni leaders encouraging their people to vote for the new constitution given the stipulations of its approval, the Sunni public nearly defeated the adoption of the constitution at the polls since three Sunni provinces registered a negative vote of over 50 percent.<sup>316</sup>

In subsequent Iraqi elections, a multi-tiered districted proportional representation system was utilized instead of the single nationwide district proportional representation system. Under the new system, votes cast in a governorate were divided by the number of allocated seats to produce a "governorate quota."<sup>317</sup> Any party that saw results exceeding the governorate quota was allocated one seat with further seats allocated in multiples of the quota. This process was repeated in every governorate to fill the 230 district-based Assembly seats with an additional 45 seats distributed first among the parties that

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Diamond and Dawisha, p. 95.

failed to pass the barrier in a single governorate but garnered enough support nationally to satisfy the “national electoral quota,” and then among all participating parties with seats allocated by their percentage of the national vote garnered.<sup>318</sup>

This system addressed primarily Sunni complaints that the single nationwide district system put the group at a disadvantage and resulted in a higher Sunni turnout in subsequent elections.<sup>319</sup> For example, Anbar, the Sunni-majority district that had the lowest voter turnout in the country in the January 2005 election, saw its voter turnout percentage leap from 2.42 percent of the eligible voting population to 38.35 percent in the October 2005 election and then to 86.37 percent in the December 2005 election.<sup>321</sup>

Other factors that most certainly contributed to the increase in Sunni participation seen in the October and December elections were the implementation of new security measures, including an all-Iraqi security perimeter around polling stations, increased auxiliary U.S. military support before and after election days, recruitment of Sunni poll workers, and even coordination with Sunni insurgents in Sunni-majority districts.<sup>322</sup> Even with the additional protection measures, Sunni politicians who advocated participation in elections

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Diamond, “How a Vote Could Derail Democracy.”

<sup>321</sup> Mozaffar.

<sup>322</sup> Diamond and Dawisha.

and rejected violence were oftentimes “gunned down in broad daylight” or killed in “coordinated attacks on party headquarters.”<sup>323</sup>

While subsequent elections saw increased voter turnout and more adequate precautionary measures implemented, sectarianism still deeply pervaded the Iraqi elections. The subsequent Iraqi elections in 2005 mainly saw each ethnic and religious group playing to their bases rather than trying to coalition build, effectively turning the elections into identity referendums.<sup>324</sup>

For example, Sunni coalitions accused the United Iraqi Alliance (Iraq’s largest Shi’a party that led the transitional government) of inadequacy in terms of providing basic services such as electricity, jobs, health care, and security, especially in Sunni-majority districts.<sup>325</sup> Likewise, the Sunni coalitions played up the issue of the UIA’s relationship with Iran (the prominent Shi’a leader Iyad Allawi had previously stated that the UIA would “continue doing Iran’s bidding in Iraq”), suggesting that the UIA’s coziness with the Iranian government would result in civil war within Iraq.<sup>326</sup>

Likewise, Kurdish autonomy was non-negotiable from the get-go; the Kurds were unwilling to be a part of Iraq if Kurdistan were not integrated into Iraq via a federalist structure that would allow Kurdistan to operate with a large degree of autonomy.<sup>327</sup> While the Sunnis and Shi’a recognized that federalism

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

needed to be a part of Iraq in order to appease the Kurds, it did lead to great concern on behalf of the Sunnis that they would be left with control of very little of Iraq's equity in terms of oil and gas should Shi'a groups (primarily UIA leadership and one of the UIA's constituent groups, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, or SCIRI) collaborate to create a super-region in the south where Shi'a support is strongest and most of Iraq's resources are concentrated.<sup>328</sup>

Similarly, the idea of intermingling religion and politics was opposed by most Sunni groups, mainly because of Sunni fears that Iraqi Shi'a would attempt to secede to their co-religionist neighbor Iran (taking with them the south's resources) as well as the Sunnis' aversion to making Shi'a Islam the driving force behind Iraqi policy.<sup>329</sup> The UIA did attempt to downplay the issue of religion in politics by stating that religion was only "one of several factors it would use to shape public policy," but it did little to assuage Sunni fears that the UIA would utilize its relationship with Iran to help create a Shi'a super-region in the south that would contain over 80 percent of Iraq's oil.<sup>330</sup>

The December 2005 elections had a voter turnout rate of 76 percent.<sup>331</sup> The Kurds led the way in terms of turnout with the Kurdish governorate of Erbil yielding the country's highest participation at 95.26 of eligible voters.<sup>332</sup> The Sunni provinces saw a huge increase in voter participation with the Sunni-majority governorate of Anbar yielding an 86.37 percent turnout rate,

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Mozaffar, p. 6.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

approximately 43 times the participation rate seen in the first Iraqi election when Anbar's turnout was barely over two percent.<sup>333</sup>

Although Shi'a turnout rates were not as impressive as the Kurds' and Sunnis' rates in their dominant governorates, the sheer numerical advantage Shi'a have within Iraq resulted in the UIA receiving 41.2 percent of the national vote, granting them 128 seats in the Assembly. The Kurdistan Alliance came in second nationally with 21.7 percent of the vote and the Sunni's Accord Front came in third with 15.1 percent of the vote.<sup>334</sup>

Although the CPA's Independent High Electoral Commission (IECI), political parties, and coalitions deployed ample resources to observe the election (the chief electoral officer said that this was "one of the most observed [elections] in the whole world,") the UIA's victory was disputed.<sup>335</sup> Due to allegations that the Independent High Electoral Commission (IECI) was "doing the UIA's bidding," the IECI invited an international commission to look into allegations surrounding voter fraud.<sup>336</sup> The international commission found that infractions had indeed occurred, but that they would not have changed the outcome of the election, resulting in the certification of the election results on February 10, 2006.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Diamond and Dawisha, p. 99.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

The ramifications of the December 2005 Iraqi elections are quite significant in terms of understanding the difficulty in democratizing Iraq. In every governorate within Iraq, the majority ethnic or religious group won the vast majority of seats the governorates had to offer; Shi'a governorates voted for the UIA or other Shi'a groups, Kurds voted for Kurdish parties, and Sunnis voted for Sunni parties.<sup>338</sup> The Iraqi List, a secular Iraqi party that was favored by the Bush administration, garnered only 8 percent of the vote in Iraq as Table 1 shows, killing any dream the United States had of creating a democratic Iraqi government devoid of religious underpinnings.<sup>339</sup>

**TABLE 1—RESULTS OF THE DECEMBER 2005 IRAQI ELECTIONS**

PARTY OR ALLIANCE	PERCENT OF NATIONAL VOTE	PERCENT OF NATIONAL SEATS	GOVERNORATE SEATS	NATIONAL SEATS	TOTAL
United Iraqi Alliance (Shiite)	41.2	46.5	109	19	128
Kurdistan Alliance	21.7	19.3	43	10	53
Accord Front (Sunni)	15.1	16.0	37	7	44
Iraqi List (secular)	8.0	9.1	21	4	25
National Dialogue Front (Sunni)	4.1	4.0	9	2	11
Kurdish Islamic Union	1.3	1.8	4	1	5
Liberation & Conciliation (Sunni)	1.1	1.1	3	0	3
Risaliyoon (Shi'ite Sadrists)	1.2	0.7	1	1	2
Turkomen Front	0.7	0.4	1	0	1
Iraqi Nation (secular)	0.3	0.4	1	0	1
Yezidi Front	0.2	0.4	1	0	1
Rafidayn List (Christian)	0.4	0.4	0	1†	1
Total	95.3*	100	230	45	275

\* The remaining votes were won by more than 200 other lists that failed to qualify for a single seat.

† This was technically a compensatory seat. This was the lone list to qualify for a national compensatory seat after failing to win any governorate seats.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

Despite the prevalence of sectarianism in the December 2005 elections, the inability of any party to attain an outright majority necessitated that Iraqis of different religions and ethnicities work together to acquire the two-thirds of the National Assembly required to form a government.<sup>340</sup> Similarly, intra-group differences are significant enough across ethnically and religiously similar parties that coalition building outside of identity might be possible. Intra-group differences can be seen most clearly when examining the Shi'a groups making up the UIA. For example, the Sadrists, one of the UIA's constituent groups that has a "pronounced affinity with Sunni groups," does not support the UIA and SCIRI leadership's desire to create a super-region in the south of Iraq.<sup>341</sup> Likewise, the al-Fadhila faction of the UIA has expressed a desire to work with the Iraqi List, breaking with UIA dogma.<sup>342</sup>

Being much smaller, the Sunni and Kurdish coalitions' might not be as prone to breakage as the UIA, yet there are certainly differences between members of each group, particularly in terms of religious fundamentalism within the Sunni groups and the degree of autonomy desired by Kurdish factions that could open up possibilities for members of these groups to cross ethnic and religious lines to govern.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid, p. 101.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.



## **Coercive Democratization in Iraq: Success or Failure?**

The United States' democratization effort in Iraq is extraordinarily complicated, especially when the effort is viewed holistically. On the one hand, the United States did succeed in increasing the political and personal freedoms of Iraqis, who had long been ruled autocratically, and significantly expanded the rights and political power of long-marginalized groups such as the Shi'a and Kurds. On the other hand, the United States' democratization effort resulted in significant loss of life within the country and made Iraq far more unstable internally due to the proliferation of insurgent groups within the country following the United States' 2003 invasion. Similarly, Iraq still does not live up to the expectations of a democratic state in terms of religious and social tolerance. These phenomena pose the serious question, was coercive democratization in Iraq a success or a failure?

Perhaps the most serious factor in determining whether it is accurate to categorize the United States' democratization effort in Iraq as a success or as a failure is the sheer number of people who died as a result of the United States' attempt to democratize Iraq. According to researchers at the University of Washington Department of Global Health there were about 461,000 excessive deaths directly attributable to the Iraq War.<sup>344</sup> 60% of the deaths are attributable to violence resulting from the war whereas an additional 40% of the deaths are attributable to war-related causes, such as destroyed infrastructure and a

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<sup>344</sup> Hagopian, p. 10.

hamstrung health care system.<sup>345</sup> While not denying the good that arose from the United States' democratization of Iraq, there is a serious argument to be made that the sheer loss of life the democratization effort brought to Iraq might indeed delegitimize the practice of coercive democratization or at the very least put the coercive democratization of Iraq into the failure category by default.

This is an especially convincing argument given all of the blunders that the United States made in democratizing Iraq. Perhaps the most significant blunder the U.S. made pertaining to the loss of life parameter was the United States' decisions to completely disband the Iraqi Army and forbid Baath Party members from serving in the new government. Doing so alienated a well-armed group that was already going to be resistant to the idea of a democratic Iraq (the Arab Sunnis) due to the loss of power the minority was going to experience via a popularly elected government by stripping many members of the Sunni community of their livelihoods; a major portion of the Baathist Iraqi Army was Sunni Arab. Likewise, many Baath Party members were only members of the party due to the social mobility that came with Baath Party membership in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In other words, the fledgling democratic state of Iraq was deprived of many civil servants who could have contributed to repairing Iraq's critical infrastructure due to a heavy-handed decree to eject Iraqis from public service positions based primarily on party affiliation.

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

Although the United States' invasion of Iraq did transform Iraq into a democracy with universal suffrage, Freedom House, a non-profit non-governmental organization that researches political freedom, democracy, and human rights around the world considers Iraq "not free" in its 2021 rankings, scoring the country at 29 out of 100 possible points.<sup>346</sup> There are several major reasons for Iraq's current abysmal ranking in terms of the political and civil rights enjoyed by its people. Currently, many of the issues Iraq faces stem from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but the wildcard of COVID-19 largely serves the purpose of highlighting the vestiges of more endemic problems within the Iraqi state rather than creating new problems.

For example, Iraq's already subpar health system was unable to handle the volume of patients needing treatment during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns imposed by Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Government authorities to combat the spread of COVID-19 were in actuality used to put down protests and curtail free speech.<sup>347</sup> The lockdowns also increased financial hardship experienced by the country's low-wage workers and business owners.<sup>348</sup>

Likewise, 1.3 million Iraqis remain internally displaced as a result of the violence that occurred surrounding the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) terrorist organization which formed in 2006 as a response to the United States' 2003 invasion. ISIS' violent operations since 2006 have significantly hindered Iraq's ability to rebuild critical infrastructure and protect its

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<sup>346</sup> "Iraq: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report."

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

citizens' liberties and persons.<sup>349</sup> Although the group's power has diminished since the Iraqi government's forces successfully drove the group out of its stronghold in Mosul in 2017, ISIS' presence in the region is a direct result of the United States' invasion and actively detracts from the quality of life and safety of Iraqis.<sup>350</sup>

Civil liberties are also not frequently protected by the Iraqi government. Iraq is an extremely socially conservative country and women's, as well as LGBT, rights are significantly limited. For example, while both the Council of Representatives of Iraq (CoR) and Kurdish parliament have quota systems in place to ensure that there are women representatives in the bodies, women are typically forbidden from participating in debates and are barred from holding leadership positions, in effect nullifying their inclusion in the political process (as Freedom House reports, "such formal representation has had little obvious effect on state policies toward women,").<sup>351</sup> Members of the LGBT community also are "unable to enjoy equal political rights in practice" due to social intolerance of the lifestyle in Iraq.<sup>352</sup> In a similar vein, the official Iraqi educational dogma is plagued by sectarian and religious instructors teaching from their own viewpoints to the detriment of social cohesion.<sup>353</sup> Likewise, educators who teach or discuss

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

topics that influential state or nonstate actors disapprove of oftentimes face threats of violent repercussion.<sup>354</sup>

In other words, while the United States has succeeded in creating regular, competitive elections in the state, Iraq is no true democracy as a result of the 2003 invasion. The question that remains to be addressed is whether or not Iraq is better off following the United States' invasion than it was under the rule of Saddam Hussein.

Under Saddam Hussein, one group (the Sunni Arabs) was significantly favored over the Kurds and Shi'a Arabs. Hussein also pursued genocidal campaigns against the Kurds (an estimated 50,000-100,000 perished during Hussein's Anfal campaigns) and deportation campaigns against the Shi'a (35,000 Shi'a were deported to Iran at the behest of Hussein).<sup>355</sup> In total, Hussein's rule of Iraq resulted in the deaths or disappearances of about 250,000 Iraqis.<sup>357</sup>

In fact, Freedom House notes that while Iraq was under the rule of Hussein from the 1970s until 2003, Iraq was significantly less free than the country has been since the United States' 2003 invasion in terms of both political rights and civil liberties.<sup>358</sup> That being said, Human Rights Watch, a human rights non-profit research and advocacy group, has come to the conclusion that the

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> "Anfal Campaign and Kurdish Genocide - Department of Information Technology, KRG," Anfal Campaign and Kurdish Genocide - Department of Information Technology, KRG, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://us.gov.krd/en/issues/anfal-campaign-and-kurdish-genocide/>.

<sup>357</sup> "War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention."

<sup>358</sup> "Freedom in the World," Freedom House, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>.

United States' invasion of Iraq cannot be justified under the guise of humanitarian intervention.<sup>359</sup> The group's specific language for taking this position is as follows:

Brutal as Saddam Hussein's reign had been, the scope of the Iraqi government's killing in March 2003 was not of the exceptional and dire magnitude that would justify humanitarian intervention. We have no illusions about Saddam Hussein's vicious inhumanity. Having devoted extensive time and effort to documenting his atrocities, we estimate that in the last twenty-five years of Ba`th Party rule the Iraqi government murdered or "disappeared" some quarter of a million Iraqis, if not more. In addition, one must consider such abuses as Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers. However, by the time of the March 2003 invasion, Saddam Hussein's killing had ebbed.<sup>360</sup>

In other words, by the time that the United States decided to invade in 2003, the worst of Hussein's killings had already transpired. What followed the United States' attempt at democratizing Iraq was an additional 461,000 Iraqi deaths.<sup>361</sup> While it would be unfair to say that had no intervention occurred these deaths would never have taken place, it is difficult to claim that the current state of a democratic Iraq is all that different than the autocratic Iraq that existed under Hussein 18 years prior. Yes, elections are regular, voting rights are universal, and there are no more state-sanctioned expulsions or genocides, but sectarianism still drives most political decisions, violence is still widespread, infrastructure still leaves much to be desired, and political and social equality has not been fully attained for all members of Iraqi society, women and LGBT Iraqis in particular.

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<sup>359</sup> "War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention," Human Rights Watch, January 25, 2004, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2004/01/25/war-iraq-not-humanitarian-intervention>.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Hagopian, p. 10.

In order to characterize Iraq's democratization as a success, the occupation would have needed to make greater gains and fewer people would have had to perish. The mistakes made by the United States during its democratization effort exacerbated or failed to address the existing problems surrounding ethnic and religious identity that Iraq has historically grappled with and have resulted in losses of life exceeding that seen under Hussein's brutally repressive Baathist regime. Therefore, the coercive democratization of Iraq is indeed a failure in spite of the clear gains that were made in regard to the transition of Iraq from an autocracy to a democracy.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

Coercive democratization, or the act of an occupying country imposing democracy upon an occupied nation, has become a hotly contested topic following the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. The democratization of Iraq is viewed as a failure by many people who assisted in the democratization of Iraq, such as political scientist Larry Diamond and Ambassador Barbara Bodine, due to the loss of life and destabilization that occurred in Iraq following the United States' occupation. That being said, the United States' occupation and coercive democratization of Japan was a resounding success, with Japan attaining a high standard of living and its people enjoying life in a democratic society.

In other words, Japan and Iraq certainly experienced two very different outcomes from their experiences undergoing coercive democratization at the hands of the United States, and there are several distinctions between the states of Iraq and Japan that help to explain the lacuna in outcomes for coercive democratization between the two countries.

The differences between the states of Iraq and Japan begin with their statuses prior to the United States' occupations. First off, Iraq is a heterogeneous society. Iraq's population consists of three major ethnic and religious groups, being Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'a and Kurds, most of which are Sunni. These groups account for about 20, 60, and 20 percent of Iraq's population respectively. Japan, on the other hand, is a homogeneous society; about 98% of people living in Japan are ethnically Japanese. Religion also plays a much smaller role in Japanese



society than it does in Iraqi society, meaning there is one less identity upon which divisions can form in Japan.

Another related difference is the turbulent past that Iraq has experienced. The area that now constitutes the modern-day state of Iraq was originally three separate vilayets, or governing districts, under the Ottoman Empire, each of which were oriented towards one distinct ethnic or religious group. The vilayet of Bursa, located in the south of Iraq, was predominantly Shi'a, the vilayet of Baghdad, located in the central region of Iraq, was heavily influenced by the Sunni, and the vilayet of Mosul was predominantly Kurdish. Each vilayet operated with a significant degree of autonomy as well. Since the Ottoman Empire was a Sunni empire, Sunnis were favored for lucrative jobs in the Ottoman government, alienating the Shi'a and Kurds.

The Sunnis continued to prosper under the British who combined the three Ottoman vilayets and created the modern-day boundaries of Iraq, and then once again prospered under the rule of Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party once the group began consolidating political power in the 1970s. Ethnic and religious tension significantly increased under Hussein as he engaged in the ethnic cleansing of Kurds and mass deportation of Shi'a to neighboring Iran. About 35,000 Shi'a were deported by Hussein and the violence propagated against the Kurds resulted in the Kurds operating with complete autonomy in Kurdistan, a predominantly Kurdish region in the north of Iraq, from 1991 until 2003.

On the other hand, prior to the United States' occupation of Japan, the country enjoyed over 300 years of existence as an independent, internally stable

country. In fact, Japan was a colonial power prior to the United States' occupation of the country with colonial possessions in Manchuria and Korea. While Iraq had to turn its focus inward to quell infighting between the various ethnic and religious groups that make up the country, Japan's homogeneity and the internal stability that allowed came along with it allowed the country to expand its international influence.

Pickering and Peceny's theories concerning institutional ethnic conflict and state age certainly appear to be applicable to the cases of Japan and Iraq given their experiences during their coercive democratizations. Whereas Iraq was plagued by internal ethnic conflict and experienced an ethnic minority ruling via fiat throughout most of its existence, Japan had been a country for and governed by the Japanese right up until the United States began its occupation. The absence of serious ethnic divisions in Japan certainly contributed to the creation of a strong Japanese identity that served the country quite well insofar as internal strife was concerned. The institution of the Emperor was an important unifying factor for the Japanese people and the Japanese government was able to hold together Japan for over 300 years without the country coming apart at the seams. Under Pickering and Peceny's theories, both the lack of institutional ethnic strife and the longevity of the Japanese state are strikes in the country's favor as to why coercive democratization worked in Japan.

Iraq, on the other hand, has historically been highly sectarianized. This can be seen in the division of Iraq into ethnically and religiously dominated vilayets when it was contained within the Ottoman Empire and later on after the country

gained its independence when an entire region of Iraq, Kurdistan, broke away from the Baathist government of Saddam Hussein's Iraq and operated autonomously for over a decade. Iraq is also quite a young country, Iraq only gained its independence in 1932 after all, and throughout its independence Iraq has been plagued by ethnic and religious violence amounting to genocidal proportions. This is especially true from the late 1970s onward when Saddam Hussein's Baathist government began deporting thousands of Shi'a to Iran and systematically exterminated Iraqi Kurds. Pickering and Peceny would attribute the failure of Iraq to democratize to the clear ethnic tensions present in Iraqi society as well as the relative youth of the Iraqi state, and the evidence seems to suggest that these factors played a major role in said failure.

In addition to the statuses of Iraq and Japan differing significantly prior to U.S. occupation, the United States also treated each occupation quite differently. In Iraq, there was a well thought out plan to democratize Iraq formulated by Iraqi diaspora and U.S. government experts before the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. This plan was dubbed the Future of Iraq Project and addressed several key issues that any good plan for democratizing Iraq would have contained including to what extent purging of Baath Party members was necessary and the type of electoral system best suited for Iraq. However, this project was completely discarded by the Bush Administration. Ambassador Barbara Bodine, the Coalition Provisional Authority's Coordinator for the Central Region of Iraq during the initial occupation, told me in an interview that this decision was primarily a result of Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld being

more concerned with installing a pro-U.S. government in Iraq rather than bringing democracy to Iraq.

Ambassador Bodine also told me in an interview that the number of troops allocated to the democratization effort was nowhere near enough to police the newly occupied Iraq and that her team often lacked basic protection equipment and office supplies. The Coalition Provisional Authority also decided to hold elections despite overwhelming Sunni opposition. This resulted in the elections becoming an identity referendum and many Sunnis, most of whom had lost their jobs as a result of the United States' decision to completely dissolve the Iraqi Army and purge Baath Party members from the Iraqi bureaucracy, did not participate in Iraq's first election due to the fact that, as a minority, a democratic system would significantly favor the Shi'a, making Sunni view their participation as pointless. The dissolution of the Iraqi Army did more damage than hurt Sunni pride, it took away their livelihood and encouraged them to act violently. This resulted in many well trained and well-armed Sunni forming militias and engaging in terrorism throughout the occupation. In fact, the renowned Sunni extremist terrorist group ISIS traces its origins to the United States' occupation of Iraq and is still active in the country in 2021.

In stark contrast to the occupation plans for Iraq, the occupation plans for Japan were not only well thought out, but actualized. In fact, the Department of State started planning for the occupation of Japan two years prior to Japan's surrender in 1945. Key provisions of the plans included the demilitarization of Japan, the rewriting of the Japanese constitution, and liberalizing the Japanese

economy somewhat by instituting land reforms and breaking up Japanese *zaibatsus*, or monopolies. The demilitarization of Japan was a non-negotiable condition on the Japanese's surrender due to Japan's rampant expansionism preceding and during World War II.

In fact, Article 9 of the U.S.-imposed Japanese constitution explicitly forbade Japan from having a military outside of a small Self-Defense Force that was to be used for self-defense only and not be deployed outside of Japanese territory. The United States also committed a significant amount of resources and number of personnel to the democratization of Japan. Even before the occupation began the United States planned on creating long-term military bases in Japan. In other words, the United States was intent on remaining in Japan for an extended period of time. In fact, the United States still maintains a military presence in Japan to this day.

The United States also made the crucial decision to keep the Japanese bureaucracy intact, thus not depriving the Japanese of their best and brightest civil servants. The downside to keeping the old bureaucracy intact was that the new Japanese government was very conservative and only really made marginal gains in terms of social reformations. However, the Japanese as a people are quite conservative, and in the first Japanese democratic elections utilizing universal suffrage conservative candidates significantly outperformed liberal ones, thus showing that the conservative Japanese government was in fact in place by the will of the Japanese people.

The results of the United States' attempts to coercively democratize Iraq and Japan differed in their outcomes just as they differed in their preparations and implementations. Iraq is arguably worse off now than it was under Saddam Hussein. Even when taking into account the ethnic cleansing and murders committed by Hussein and the Baathist government of Iraq, more Iraqis have died as a result of the United States' invasion than did during Hussein's autocratic regime. Estimates place Hussein's body count at around 250,000 Iraqis. Estimates also blame the United States' occupation of Iraq for 461,000 Iraqi deaths.

As Ambassador Bodine started while I was interviewing her, life under Saddam Hussein for the average Iraqi was similar to living in a minimum-security prison; so long as one toed the line and played by Hussein's rules, one could expect a baseline security and to have one's basic necessities taken care of. Now, in the absence of Hussein's rigorous policing of Iraqi society and in the face of the United States' unwillingness to adequately police Iraq, Iraq is far more dangerous than it has been in the past, and murders and kidnappings are commonplace occurrences. Political power has also been concentrated in the hands of the Arab Shi'a, much to the ire of the Sunni Arabs, many of whom have turned to insurgency out of dissatisfaction with their new, diminished role in society. Likewise, Iraq's infrastructure never recovered from destruction caused by fighting during the occupation, meaning education and health apparatuses have been crippled. Although Iraqis can now cast a ballot for a political group of their choosing, Iraqis are worse off now in their everyday lives than they were under Hussein's oppressive regime.

Japan, on the other hand, has thrived since the United States transformed the country into a democracy. The Japanese people significantly benefited from the land reformatations that the United States implemented during its occupation of Japan. Agrarian distress was quickly identified as a reason why Japan pursued imperialism by the U.S. government. The Japanese government was relying on glory abroad to compensate for social injustice at home concerning the fact that farmers were barely able to sustain themselves due to the exorbitantly high rents prices on farmland in the country. The high rents were attributable to the concentration of much of Japanese land in the hands of a small few landlords, and the United States, through its land reforms, eased the suffering of the impoverished Japanese farmers thus alleviating a source of internal tension that would most likely have negatively influenced the coercive democratization of Japan.

Similarly, Japan has renounced aggression and is one of the most peaceful countries in the international community in which it plays the role of a merchant state, thus giving the country a strong economy. The United States certainly pursued the right course of action for democratizing Japan, suggesting that the long-term results of an attempt at coercive democratization requires leaving at least some apparatus of the occupied state's government in place and a long-term presence (or in this case an indefinite presence) by the occupier to be successful. Indeed, right-wing parties have thrived in Japan's democratic government, yet there is nothing inherently wrong with that, especially since the Japanese people have chosen to live their lives that way via voting. Japan has also not had to worry

about funding a military program since the United States began providing military protection for Japan following occupation, freeing up the country's finances to invest in areas such as technology, which has paid off tremendously for the country economically.

The fact of the matter is that both of the discussed coercive democratization efforts in Japan and Iraq were pre-planned by the United States' government. However, the U.S. only implemented the plan it had for the coercive democratization of Japan. As a result, Japan has prospered economically and socially and Iraq remains unstable, economically crippled, and far more unsafe than Japan.

There is a strong argument to be made that Japan was simply more primed for democracy than Iraq was; after all, Japan had a history of internal stability and was a homogeneous society before it was a democracy, and political science theories back up claims that these factors positively influence the ability of a country to democratize. These theories, however, do not by themselves account for the fact that the United States simply did not follow the plan that it had commissioned for Iraq and that had been worked on for 18 months by people who were familiar with Iraq.

The plan had within it ideas that would have prevented the disastrous complete dissolution of the Iraqi military, prevented the widespread looting and destruction of government buildings, and addressed some of the problems, such as ensuring equal treatment, equal representation, and ensuring some degree of



satisfaction for all groups involved, that arise from democratizing a highly sectarianized society.

That being said, there is some validity in Pickering and Peceny's theory that institutional ethnic conflict negatively correlates with a country's ability to democratize. Indeed, the turbulent history of Iraq has contributed at least partially to the failure to democratize Iraq. For example, there exists much tension between the Sunnis, Shi'a, and Kurds due to the fact that Sunnis have been in control of governing Iraq from the time of the Ottomans onward, and oftentimes used their authority to oppress the Shi'a and the Kurds. The residual resentment that no doubt exists between the now politically dominant majority group, the Shi'a, and the now deposed minority group the Sunnis, will continue to be an issue in the experiment of Iraqi democracy as some Sunni groups resort to violence to regain their lost power and the Shi'a cozy up to Iran, threatening to plunge the country into civil war. Likewise, the Kurds' desire for autonomy has been a perennial problem for each group that has tried to rule Iraq and it does not appear that the Kurdish problem has been adequately addressed via the United States' democratization attempt.

In reality, the successful coercive democratization of Japan and the unsuccessful coercive democratization of Iraq can largely be explained by the different levels of commitment each democratization attempt received from the United States in terms of resource allocation and policy implementation as well as the historic stability and homogeneity of Japan and the historic instability and

heterogeneity of Iraq.

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